



MANUAL
OF
THE DEVOTIONAL PATH OF PUṢṬI

SHARAD GOSWAMI



Manual of the devotional path of Puṣṭi

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Kansara Bazar, MANDVI, Dist. Kutch, Gujarat-370 465, India.

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Copies : 1000

Voluntary Publication Aid : Rs. 65.

Published in 2002

Publisher :

Śrī Vallabhācārya Trust,
Kaṅsārā Bajār, MĀNDVĪ, Dist. Kutch,
Gujarāt - 370 465, Bhārat
Phone: 02834 - 31463, 21306
Email: gosharad@rediffmail.com
www.pushtimarg.net

Printer :

Sri Vallabha Book Manufacturing Co.,
Kāṅkariyā Road, Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

ŚRĪHARIḤ

*Jayati Śrī Vallabhāryo,
Jayati ca Viṭhaleśvaraḥ prabhuḥ śrīmān,
Puruṣottamaśca taiśca,
Nirdīstā puṣṭi - paddhatir jayati*

Whether we say “Śravaṇa - Manana - Nididhyāsana” (Hearing - Remembering - Meditating) in Upaniṣdic language or “Śravaṇa - Kīrtana - Smaraṇa” (Hearing - Remembering - Singing) in the language of Śrī Bhāgavata; or say “Kathā - Satsaṅga” in ordinary language, whatever words we may use, we shall have to accept their two forms from the doctrinal point of view: ‘Sambodha’ and ‘Sādhanā’. ‘Sambodha’ means: Knowledge i.e. to receive knowledge of the desired scriptures by sitting near the guru for receiving his instruction, proper understanding of doctrines and duties. ‘Sādhanā’ means: to put into practice the things heard through the auspicious mouth of Guru.

Because we have forgotten our ancient ideals we are entwined in the web of confusion of treating listening of the preaching as one’s ‘Sādhanā’ and of searching some instructions from ‘Sādhanā’. So, today, people consider ‘Śravaṇa-Bhakti’ to the preaching of doctrines and duties of the sect. In place of having Bhagavān’s worship and songs at home as

a means of accomplishment, people encourage money-mindedly arranged public worshipping thinking: "We shall, at least, have something to know". Because of this contrariety in the present Puṣṭimārga both purposes have been wasted. We have achieved neither the means nor the end, neither Sādhanā nor Sambodha.

I express my good wishes for this book "*Manual of the devotional path of Puṣṭi*" which is going to see the light of the day that it may become successful-fruitful in awakening divine light and devout sentiment among the disciples of Puṣṭi sect by the auspicious blessings and grace of ŚrīMahāprabhu and ŚrīPrabhucaraṇa.

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PREFACE

To be ignorant of the doctrines of one's Dharma - Saṁpradāya is as pitiable as it is for any living being to be blind. The ignorance of the doctrines of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-mārg that prevails among its followers is apparent. Seeing such a miserable situation one resolve rose in mind: "Not a single Vaisṇava who is proud of being a follower of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga should remain ignorant of the basic principles of his sect". Holding this holy resolve it was decided to start an examination programme.

Ten years before, in Junāgaḍha (Gujārat), I was asked by revered Kākāji (Goswami Shri Kishorchandraji, Junagadha) to prepare a syllabus for the students of Śrī Puruṣottama Puṣṭimāgīya Pāṭhaśālā, Junagadha. In 1992 the first book of the course 'Praveśikā' was published. Six thousand students appeared in the first examination from all over the country. Such an unprecedented welcome to the examination programme from everywhere was not possible without the grace of Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa and ŚrīĀcāryacaraṇa. We became more resolute and enthusiast. Praveśikā was translated in Hindi and English (Praveśikā: A primer of Śuddhādvaita Puṣṭibhakti Sect) also. In Praveśikā, basic tenets of the sect are explained concisely. The same topics of Praveśikā are further elaborated in depth in subsequent year's textbooks i.e. Puṣṭipraveśa 1-2 and in Puṣṭipatha, originally written in Gujarati. All the books have been published in Hindi.

ACTIVITIES OF SHRI VALLABHACHARYA TRUST

SEMINARS:

A. External Seminar:

First grade external seminars for exploring philosophical aspects of Śuddhādvaita-Puṣṭibhakti Saṁpradāya, every year.

1. First one was arranged on "The Linguistic Philosophy of Śuddhādvaita School of Vedānta" in the month of November 1999.
2. Second one was arranged on "Theory of Causation of Śuddhādvaita School of Vedānta" in November 2000.
3. Third seminar was arranged on "The theory of Error (Khyāti)" in January 2002.

B. Internal Seminar:

Second grade internal seminars for exploring internal aspects of Śuddhādvaita Puṣṭibhakti Saṁpradāya.

1. First one was arranged on "Vaiṣṇava Vāratā" at Halol, Gujarat in July 1999.
2. Second seminar was arranged on "The concept of Adhikar-Qualification" in the month of April 2001.
3. Third one is proposed on "Sādhanā-Praṇālī of Śuddhādvaita Puṣṭibhakti Saṁpradāya" in the month of June 2002.

PUBLICATION:

A. Proceedings of the Seminars

Śbdakhaṇḍīyā Vidvat-paricarcā (published)

Varta-Paricharch (published)

Adhikāra Paricarcā (Published)

Kārya-Kāraṇabhāva Mīmāsā (to be released shortly)

Anyakhyāti (to be released shortly)

B. Unpublished classical Saṁskṛt texts

Commentaries on the works of Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha-prabhucaraṇa, son of Śrī Vallabhācārya.

C. Discourses of Ācāryas

Gītā, Sevākaumudī, Śodaśagrantha, Sādhanā-prakaraṇam, Nāvāra-

And now, this book "*Manual of the devotional path of Puṣṭi*" is the English translation of the abovementioned three books, published in 1993, 1994 and 1995 respectively. It gives me immense pleasure in placing this book in the hands of inquisitive readers.

I cannot forget the great co-operation of Prof. M. R. Paleja who meticulously translated the complete syllabus. I am deeply indebted to him.

Those who have gone through the Gujarati and Hindi books, however, may find some additions and alterations in this book. All such changes I myself have made.

My thanks are also due to Śrī Dilipbhāi Rājādā, Principal of SKRM School, Mandvi and Śrī Varṣāben who both very carefully perused drafts of this book and made extremely valuable suggestions.

The blessings received from revered Śrī Shyama manoharjī has been a great impetus to fulfil our resolve.

On behalf of Shri Vallabhacharya Trust

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tna,-Patrāvalarīnbanarī, Prameyarnārnava, Pañcaślokī, Sarvotta-
mastotra, Siddhānta-vacanāvalī, Puṣṭi-pravāha-maryādābheda,
Bhakti-vardhinī, Sevā main līlā, Vallabha-vacanāmṛta.

D. Books presently not available :

Vraj commentary on Tāvārtha-dīpa-nibandha of Śrī Vallabhācārya.

Śāstrārtha Prakaraṇarī (published)

Sarvanirṇaya Prakaraṇarī (published)

Vraj commentary on Ṣoḍaśa-grantha of Vallabhācārya.

Bhagavad Gītā: (to be released shortly) Contain commentaries of
Śrī Puruṣottamacarana (Hindi translation), Śrī Nanulal Gandhi (Gujarati) and
Muśṅkar Motirām Śāstī (Gujarati) along with the numerous important small
works on Gītā.

Śrīmad Bhāgavat: (to be released shortly) Reprint of the Gujarati
translation published by Śuddhādvaita Saṁsad, Ahmedabad.

Gujarati translation of Tāvārtha-dīpa-nibandha by late Sri Manilal
Vakil.

E. Translations of the classical works

- 'Prasthānaratnākara' by Gosvāmī Śrī Puruṣottamacharaṇa is being
translated by Prof. V. N. Jha in English.

- Aṇubhāṣya of Śrī Vallabhācārya with 'Prakāsha' & 'Raśmī'
commentaries are being translated by Dr. M. V. Joshi in Gujarati.

F. Textbooks: Textbook of the examination course conducted by Śrī Puruṣottama

Puṣṭimārgīya Pāṭhaśala and its English-Hindi translation.

Praveśikā, Gujarati (Published)

Prameya-ratna-saṁgraha, Gujarati (Published)

Praveśikā: A primer of Śuddhādvaita Puṣṭibhakti Sect, English
(Published)

Manual of the devotional path of Puṣṭi, English (Published)

LIBRARY :

A. Reference library :

Audio Cassettes : More than 1500

Video Cassettes CDs Books

B. Central library of the manuscripts :

Central library of the manuscripts of the Śuddhādvaita-Puṣṭibhakti Saṁpradāya.

At present the Trust has more than 2000 manuscripts, photocopies of the manuscripts
and Tāda-patras of various subjects like: Veda, Upaniṣad. Purāṇa, Smṛti, Jyotiṣa,
Vyākaraṇa, Dharmasāstra, Karmakāṇḍa, Sāhitya, Nyāya, Vāratā, Vacanāmṛta, Kirtana
etc. Some of them are more than 500 years old.

CONSERVATION :

Storage of valuable manuscripts into CD

Lamination of the valuable manuscripts

EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP :

Scholarship is being given to the research students studying
Śuddhādvaita Vedānta etc.

Presentation of the books of the sect to the scholars and research
students.

ENCYCLOPEDIA :

Contribution in composition of the forthcoming volume on
Śuddhādvaita Puṣṭibhakti Saṁpradāya of Encyclopedia of Indian
Philosophy edited by Dr. Karl potter, Washington.

GAUŚĀLĀ : Mandvi-Kutch

BOOK DISTRIBUTION :

Mobile book distribution mission has been started in the Saurāstra
region of the Gujarat state.

Permanent Bookstall has been settled at Naṇḍa Chauka, GOKUL
(U.P.). Books are available there of almost all publishers of
the sect.

STUDENT BOARDING :

Facilities of Lodging-Boarding & Tuition are being provided to
the students studying Saṁskṛt at Gokul, U.P. with the assistance
of "Śrī Vallabhācārya Vraj Saṁskṛti Vikāsa Trust Samiti".

WEBSITE :

www.pushtimarg.net

CATALOGUES CATALOGORUM :

Catalogues Catalogorum of the manuscripts of Śuddhādvaita
Puṣṭibhakti Saṁpradāya.

INDEX

1. Śrī Vallabhācārya	1
2. Śrī Gopīnāthajī	13
3. Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī	18
4. Śrī Yamunajī	24
5. Śrī Kṛṣṇa	28
6. Jīva-Soul	40
7. Jagat-The Universe	45
8. Mārga-Path	50
9. Saṁpradāya-Sect	54
10. Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Sect	63
11. Bhagavad-āśraya (The Refuge)	68
12. Anyāśraya (Refuge in other Gods)	94
13. Śraṇa Mārga (The path of Refuge)	109
14. Puṣṭi-Bhakti (Puṣṭi-devotion)	124
15. Initiation	140
16. Initiation of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-sect	161
17. Life full of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Service	185
18. Samarpaṇa (Dedication)	197
19. Kṛṣṇa's Service	208
20. What is Sevā	217
21. Sevyā-svarūpa (The Deity)	225
22. The Place of Service	245
23. Occupation of the Devotee	252
24. Sadācāra (Purity)	256

Mahāprabhu Śrī Vallabhācārya

The birth and death of ordinary human beings take place to avail the fruits of 'sinful and virtuous actions committed in their earlier births. But the birth and death of great men do not occur because of such ordinary reasons. Just as a king may go out from his royal palace on some special purpose and comes to his palace by his own will. Similarly, the birth and death of great persons take place by their own will on special commandment of Bhagavān. They incarnate on the earth to perform some special deeds and when their work is over they go back to their own abode.

Manifestation at the behest of Bhagavān :

In the age of Kali, all the scriptural paths of self - upliftment had been corrupted because of hypocritical beliefs. Divine Puṣṭi beings were experiencing affliction and agitation as they did not know any path to be closer with the Supreme Being Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa discerned this and so He ordained Śrī Vallabhācārya to incarnate on the earth for uplifting divine beings. Bhagavān entrusted three works to Śrī Vallabhācārya.

1. To uplift the divine Puṣṭi beings by propounding the devotional path of Puṣṭi

2. To explain the meaning of Bhāgavat which is the base of the devotional path of Puṣṭi, and
3. To proclaim the true purport of the scriptural paths of Action and Knowledge that lead to liberation.

On receiving Bhagavān's commandment Śrī Vallabhācārya incarnated in the family of a learned, virtuous Brāhmaṇa devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa of south Bhārat. In 'Śrī Vallabhāṣṭakam' hymn Śrī Viṭthalanāthajī shows what kind of situation would have been created if Śrī Vallabhācārya had not manifested.

O Mahāprabhu! If you had not graced the earth by your manifestation, Puṣṭi beings, though born as ²divine beings, would not have obtained Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. And thus, this creation of Puṣṭi beings would have been ruined in the absence of the Path of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's worship. Not only this, Puṣṭi beings wouldn't have been able to see the true path of devotion. Because, they might have followed ³paths of pretence that have been prevailed by the various incarnations of the god Śiva.

Childhood:

Śrī Vallabhācārya was born in the forest named: ⁴Campāranya somewhere in India in V.S. 1535 (A.D. 1478) during the travel of his parents from Kāśī to their native

place. His father Śrī Lakṣmaṇabhata sent him to learned Pundits for education. He showed his extraordinary genius by completing study of all religious scriptures like Veda, Purāṇa, Smṛti, Tantra etc.; and various philosophies like Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Jaina, Bauddha etc., at the age of only eight years. At the age of ten, he defeated all the learned Ācāryas of Śaṅkarācārya's doctrine of Māyā in the debate at Śrī Jagannāthapuri. In this very assembly at the royal court the king pleaded four questions to be answered by the Pundits and Ācāryas. The questions were:

1. Which Scripture is the best of all scriptures?
2. Which deity is the best of all deities?
3. Which Mantra is the best of all Mantras?
4. Which duty is the best of all duties?

Many learned Paṇḍitas and Ācāryas gave different answers to these questions but the king was not satisfied with them. At last, at the hint of Śrī Vallabhācārya, all four questions were unanimously placed before Lord Śrī Jagannātha (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) by Śrī Vallabhācārya. Alongwith this, a blank paper, an inkpot and a pen were placed in front of the Lord Jagannātha. The doors of the temple were closed. When the doors were opened, the piece of paper with a verse answering all the four questions written on it was found. The verse was:

*Ekam śastram devakīputragitam
Eko devo devakīputra eva;*

*Mantrapyekas tasya nāmāni yāni,
Karmo'pyekam tasya devasy sevā*

Meaning: Gītā sung by ŚrīKṛṣṇa, son of Devakī, is the best scripture. ŚrīKṛṣṇa, son of Devakī, is the best deity. Names of ŚrīKṛṣṇa are the best Mantra. Service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the best duty.

Bhārat wise tour :

In the assembly - hall of king Bhagavān Himself supported the doctrines propounded by ŚrīVallabhācārya by the abovementioned verse. Considering it as the ordainment of Bhagavān, ŚrīVallabhācārya went on Bhārat wise tour to publicize those doctrines. Three times barefooted ŚrīVallabhācārya went on tour throughout Bhārat. During it he had debated with the great learned Pundits and Ācāryas on the true meaning of scriptures and competently established the theory of Śuddhādvaita - Brahmvāda and the devotional path of Puṣṭi. He led towards Sanātana - Hindu - Dharma the people who were flung far from it and got converted by the terrorism of cruel converter Mogul intruders from the north - west of Bhārat. On the day of Pavitrā - ekādaśi, ŚrīVallabhācārya obtained Brahma - sambandha - mantra from Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa. On obtaining this Dīkṣā - mantra he brought in order the system of initiation and the spiritual course for the disciples.

The Renouncement :

In old time kings took it as their fortune in doing honour to the learned. Hence, they arranged for scriptural - debate

inviting the learned to solve difficult problems. The learned man who was able to prove the worth of his doctrine was honoured with ceremonies like Kanakābhiṣeka, Rajatābhiṣeka etc. ŚrīVallabhācārya, too, would participate in such scriptural - debates and establish his doctrine. As a result of this, kings would honour him with Kanakābhiṣeka etc. and dedicate to him with gold - coins, elephants, horses, gold and silver utensils etc. as gifts. But accumulation of money spoils the mind and one is not able to apply it into Bhagavān. Again, it is said in the scriptures that the wealth received from a king is somewhat more harmful. With this thought in mind, ŚrīVallabhācārya would give away all such wealth in donation to Brahmans! For this reason he has been praised in Sarvottama - Stotra as 'Mahodāra - caritravān'. It means : One having extremely generous character.

Simplicity :

The life of ŚrīVallabhācārya was extremely simple even though many of his disciples were kings and prosperous persons. He used to wear only 'Dhoti' and 'Uparaṇā', travel on foot and prepare offerings by himself. During tour he would stay in a lonely place at the outskirts of a village. He would give instruction to his disciples not to let anybody in the village know about his arrival as he had firm faith that those who were divine beings would come to him on their own accord. Attracted by his spiritual power and great knowledge many faithful people would come to him and brought for him valuable presents and gifts. But he would accept presents

and gifts from none but his own disciples.

Love for Solitude :

According to the devotional course of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Sect the worship of Bhagavān must be performed in solitude at one's own home. Hence, after the tours were over, he constructed a small hut and settled down in a small village of Adel near Prayāg permanently along with the members of his family and some people of his caste. He lived his life with whatever he received, without asking, from his disciples.

Scholarship :

Once a Brāhmaṇa well-versed in Veda came to ŚrīVallabhācārya to test his expertise in Veda. He uttered 100 Mantras of Veda one by one before ŚrīVallabhācārya. ŚrīVallabhācārya uttered the very same Mantras in reverse order and removed his pride.

Once ŚrīVallabhācārya came to Kāśī. Throughout Bhārat he was famous for his learning. Hence, a number of Pundits started coming for the discussion. On account of this he felt discomfort in performing the worship of Bhagavān, in Vaidic deeds and in preaching his disciples. Hence, he wrote the work of 'Patrāvalambanam' and got it stuck to the wall of the temple of Viśveśvara Mahādeva in Kāśī, alongwith an instruction that those who had any question left unsolved even after reading this work might come to him for discussion.

Because of this work there was abatement in coming and going of Pundits.

The Ideal Guru :

An expert jeweller buys a jewel by putting it to a touchstone. Similarly, a Guru does not make anybody his disciple, without taking test. Bhagavān had ordained ŚrīVallabhācārya to reveal the path of Puṣṭi-Bhakti for the upliftment of only Puṣṭi-Beings. Hence, the devotional path of Puṣṭi is meant only for the Puṣṭi-Beings, it is not the religion for the people of the whole universe. ŚrīVallabhācārya would grant initiation only after taking a test of the candidate so that a non-Puṣṭi being may not enter into this Path. After granting initiation ŚrīVallabhācārya did not leave any of his disciple on his fortune. He would stay at his home and teach him everything until he has proper knowledge of the doctrines and knowledge of the course of the path of Puṣṭi-devotion. If any person came to his place for receiving initiation he would welcome him at his place and teach him everything about the doctrines and method of worship etc.

Some disciples stayed with ŚrīVallabhācārya for lifetime. He would keep a watch on them so that they might not blaspheme others or might not enter into discussion unrelated to Bhagavān. He would go to see his disciples regularly twice or thrice at night. His character lets us know that a Guru should be as cautious for his disciples as a mother is worried every moment for the well-being of her little innocent child.

Composition of Works :

Bhagavān incarnated on the earth and uplifted the divine beings and after that Śrī Vedavyās (incarnation of the knowledge of Bhagavān) composed Bhāgavat so that the divine beings might be uplifted when the Bhagavān's incarnation is not present on earth. Similarly, Śrī Vallabhācārya composed various works so as to show Puṣṭi - Beings the path of devotion and to enable them to follow the devotional path of Puṣṭi without any difficulty in his absence. The chief works of Śrī Vallabhācārya are:

Aṇubhāsyā on ⁵Brhamasūtra(Incomplete)

Bhāsyā on ⁶Jaimini Sūtra (Incomplete)

Bhāsyā on Gāyatri

Pūrvamīmāṃsā - Bhāsyā - Kārikā

'Subodhini' a commentary on Bhāgavat Purāṇa (Incomplete)

'Sukṣmatīkā' a commentary on Bhāgavat Purāṇa (Incomplete)

Bhāgavat Daśamaskaṇḍha Anukramaṇikā

Patrāvalambanam

Śikṣā - ślokāḥ

TATVĀRTHA - DĪP - NIBANDHA

1. Śastrārtha - prakaraṇam

2. Sarvanirṇaya - prakaraṇam

3. Bhagavatārtha - prakaraṇam

ṢODAŚAGRANTHA

1. Yamunāṣṭakam

2. Bālabodha

3. Siddhāntamuktāvalī
4. Puṣṭi - pravāha - maryādā - bheda
5. Siddhānta - rahasyam
6. Navaratnam
7. Antaḥkaraṇa - prabodha
8. Viveka - dhairyāśraya
9. Kṛṣṇāśraya
10. Catuḥślokī
11. Bhaktivardhini
12. Jalabheda
13. Pancapadyāni
14. Sannyāsa - nirṇaya
15. Nirodha - lakṣaṇam
16. Sevāfalam

STOTRA:

- Madhurāṣṭakam
- Parivṛdhāṣṭakam,
- Śrī Kṛṣṇaṣṭakam,
- Śrī Girirāja-dhāryāṣṭam,
- Premāmṛtam
- Śrī Gopījana-vallabhāṣṭakam etc.
- Śrī Puruṣottama - nāma - sahasrī (One thousand names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa from Bhāgavat Purāṇa)
- Trividha - līlā - nāmāvalī

Back to Abode :

One of purposes of Śrī Vallabhācārya's incarnation was to enlighten the true meaning of Bhāgavat - Purāṇa. However,

to write a commentary on Bhāgavat, extended into 18000 verses, and that too during constant travel was a very difficult task. Hence, the work of writing commentary was going on in a slow process. During this period Śrī Vallabhācārya received ordainment from Bhagavān to return to his abode. Eventhough the mission was not fully accomplished. Śrī Vallabhācārya left the work of writing the commentary on Bhāgavat thinking that whatever work has been done was enough for the beings of the age of Kali. He renounced the life of a householder and accepted the stage of Sannyāsa. He dwelt on the bank of the Gaṅgā in Kāśī without taking water and food. At the age of 52 on the day of Rathayātrā in V.S. 1587 he entered the Gaṅgā and disappeared from this world.

Only this much can be said about so illustrious man like Śrī Vallabhācārya.

*Śrīmad - 'vallabha' - nāmdheya - sadṛśo
bhāvī na bhūto'styapi*

Meaning: There hadn't been, there hasn't been nor will there be one like Śrī Vallabhācārya.

“In this dire times no one except Śrī Vallabhācārya is there to uplift me” until such faith is awakened in the disciples of the Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Sect and until they become ready to carry out the doctrines of Śrī Vallabhācārya, everything is utterly vain no matter whether they may have entered into this path.

1. As the fruit of sinful action drags the human soul into the vicious-circle of birth and death, the fruit of virtuous action, too, does the similar work. Therefore, both are regarded as bondage for the human soul. In other words, the sinful action is considered as an iron chain, whereas the virtuous action is considered as a golden chain. Sinful action=Pāpa - Karma. Virtuous action = Puṇya - Karma.
2. Those beings whom Bhagavān grants devotion or liberation and decides to uplift are called divine beings.
3. How can creation go on if all beings obtain liberation by following good Paths? Hence, Bhagavān commanded Shiva to spread paths of pretence so that demoniacal beings may be tempted to tread on their path and may not obtain salvation.
4. The village originally named 'Cāmpazar' in the state of Madhaypradeśa, India near city Rāyapur but wellknown by the name: 'Campāraṇya' is presently said to be the birth place of Śrī Vallabhācārya. However, according to some people of the sect original birthplace of Śrī Vallabhācārya is yet to be found. Because, no historical evidences that can prove Cāmpazar as the birthplace of Śrī Vallabhācārya are available or shown by the concerned people. For example, neither the city Caudā nor the river Bhīmārathi is found near Champazar presently, so called birth-place of Śrī Vallabhācārya. Whereas, learned Ācārya Śrī Dvārakeśjī and Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha Bhaṭṭa have clearly mentioned in their

historical work 'Mūlapuruṣa' and 'Sampradāya-kalpadrum' respectively that the birthplace of ŚrīVallabhācārya is the forest 'Campāranya' situated near city Caudā and river Bhīmārathī.

5. Brahma - sūtra : The aphoristic work composed by Śrī Vedavyasa to explain the difficult portion of Vedānta / Upaniṣad narrating the nature and relationship of Brahma, the universe, beings etc.
6. Mīmāṃsā - sūtra : The aphoristic work composed by sage Jaimini to explain difficult portion of Veda narrating sacrifices, actions, the fruit of actions, Mantra, etc.

Books for further reading :

84 Vaiṣṇava Vāratā
 Nija Vāratā & Gharu Vāratā
 Sampradaya-pradīpa
 Vallabha-digvijaya
 Mūlapuruṣa
 Vallabhākhyaṇa
 Dholapad & Kīrtana of Vadhāi
 Vacanāmṛta

Śrī Gopīnātha - prabhucaraṇa

Of the two sons ŚrīGopīnāthajī was the elder son of ŚrīVallabhācārya. He was born at Adel on 12th dark half of the month Āśvin V.S. 1567 (A.D. 1511). His love for the worship of Bhagavān is quite well-known. Since he was trained under the guidance of ŚrīVallabhacharya himself there remains nothing to say about his scholarship. Before he became twenty, he completed the study of all scriptures.

ŚrīVallabhācārya left this world and went to his abode when ŚrīGopīnāthajī was twenty. At this small age, too, he shouldered complete responsibility of becoming the head of the Sampradāya. He had a son, ŚrīPuruṣottamajī (V.S. 1588 - AD 1620) and two daughters ŚrīSatyabhāmā - betījī and Lakṣmī - betījī.

The greatness and importance of ŚrīGopīnāthajī in Śuddhādvaita Puṣṭibhakti Sampradāya becomes apparent by seeing following verses. ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthajī pays his obeisance to his elder brother ŚrīGopīnāthajī and extols him in the following verse :

*'Yadanugrahato jantuḥ, sarva-duḥkha-tigo bhavet;
 Tam - ahaṁ sarvadā vande; śrīmad Vallabha - nandanam*

Meaning: I always prostrate to Śrī Vallabhācārya's illustrious son Śrī Gopīnāthajī, by whose divine grace, the beings go beyond all the worldly sufferings.

Similarly, Śrī Puruṣottamajī delineates the character of Śrī Gopīnāthajī:

*² Śrīvallabha - pratinidhiṁ, tejorāśīṁ dayāṁvatiḥ;
Guṇātītaṁ guṇanidhiṁ; śrīgopīnātham - āśraye*

Meaning: I take refuge in Śrī Gopīnāthajī, who is the representative of Mahāprabhu Śrī Vallabhācārya, who is the storehouse of effulgence, the ocean of compassion, who is beyond all earthly attributes and who is the very treasure of divine attributes.

Father's love:

As it was said, from his early childhood Śrī Gopīnāthajī was keenly devoted to the divine worship and remembrance of Bhagvān. He used to take his daily Mahā-prasāda (left over of the divine food offered to Bhagavān) only after reciting the entire Bhāgavat-Purāṇa with all its 18000 verses. For this reason, very often he could take his Mahā-prasāda at the interval of about two days. This was very sad-sorrowful for his mother. Śrī Vallabhācārya took a note of this and composed Śrī Puruṣottama - sahasra - nāma - stotra i.e. hymn of one thousand names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as the essence of the whole of Bhāgavat - Purāṇa for Śrī Gopīnāthajī. Today Śrī Puruṣottama - sahasra - nāma is being recited as a daily routine in the sect.

Sādhana - dīpikā:

Śrī Vallabhācārya had composed a number of works to explain philosophy, doctrines, devotional course and fruit of the Puṣṭi sect. But no independent work had been composed by Śrī Vallabhācārya that may guide a disciple in living his daily life by maintaining delicate balance between devotional duties and worldly and Vaidic duties. Śrī Gopīnāthajī accomplished this extremely important work by composing a fine small - book named 'Sādhana - dīpikā'. If the instructions narrated in this work are followed in life, one can be a follower of Puṣṭi sect in the true sense of the term.

Some instructions of Śrī Gopīnāthajī:

- One should perform the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the origin of all.
- If one spends even a moment without the remembrance of Bhagavān, one is flung far from Bhagavān.
- Devotion cannot be obtained without the grace of God, Guru, good company and the study of Śrī Bhāgavat.
- One should have respect for one's Guru.
- Devotion can be obtained in an early stage if one performs the worship and remembrance of Bhagavān with reality, purity, faith, truth, mercy - charity and control over senses.
- Consciousness about the negative and harmful aspects of the objects, control over senses and contentment in what one has obtained these three are the remedies to develop detachment.
- One should always be conscious so as not to be deviated

from Bhagavān.

- Worldly I - ness and My - ness cause hindrance in devotion.
- Company of a non - Vaiṣṇava should not be sought.
- All worldly and Vaidic duties be performed through the offered objects to Bhagavān.
- A Vaiṣṇava should welcome guests and help miserables.
- One should not make exhibition of idol, worship and offerings of Bhagavān. (One who is close but is not a Vaiṣṇava, and one who is a Vaiṣṇava but not close, both of them should not be allowed to behold worship or Svarūpa i.e. idol).
- Only those who are very much close to one who is worshipping should be allowed to behold his idol.
- One should attentively study ŚrīBhāgavat in ex-worship time.

Going to the Abode of Līlā :

After untimely death of the son ŚrīPuruṣottamajī, ŚrīGopīnāthajī went for pilgrimage. During that he visited ŚrīJagannāthapuri. It is said that there he merged into the idol of ŚrīJagannāthajī while beholding Him. He lived in this world for very few years.

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1. A being, by whose grace, does go beyond all the miseries of the world,
To him, always my obeisance be, the son of Mahārabhu ŚrīVallabha.

2. The Representative of ŚrīVallabha,
The storehouse of effulgence,
The ocean of compassion,
Who is beyond worldly attributes,
The treasure of transcendental attributes,
I take refuge in ŚrīGopīnāthajī.

Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha - prabhucaraṇa

Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī was the younger son of Śrī Vallabhācārya. In Puṣṭi-sect he is addressed in the names of Śrī Gusāñijī and Śrī Prabhucaraṇa. He had born at the village of Carañādrī (Carañāt / Cunāra) in V.S. 1572 (A.D. 1516). When he was only 15 years old Śrī Vallabhācārya went to the eternal abode. He had extreme love and respect for his elder brother Śrī Gopīnāthajī and would accomplish all works by taking permission from Śrī Gopīnāthajī.

Divine Renouncement :

Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī was fond of arts of music, painting, horse-riding etc. He regularly played on Vīṇā (stringed music instrument) before Śrī Thākuraṇī awoke. His fingers had hardened because of friction with wire of Vīṇā. Having seen this, one day his father Śrī Vallabhācārya said a word that Śrī Thākuraṇī would feel uneasy at the touch of such tough fingers. Everything is insignificant before the happiness of deity. From that day onwards he stopped playing the Vīṇā.

Once Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī was offering ornaments to his deity. At that time a disciple brought a big amount of money as a present. When the coins were dropped down, it made a loud sound. On account of this Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī's mind

was deviated from his deity for a moment. What would happen by using the wealth if at the mere sound of which ones mind is deviated from Bhagavān! With this thought in his mind, Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī refused to accept all that money.

Extension of worship for the dedication of everything :

Śrī Vallabhācārya says in his work 'Tatvārth-dīpa-nibandha':

*'Dhanam sarvātmanā tyājyam,
tacet tyaktum na śakyate;
Kṛṣṇārtham tat niyujjīta,
Kṛṣṇo'narthasya vārakaḥ.*

Meaning: Wealth leads one's mind away from Bhagavān and so, by all means, it should be abandoned. But in case, it is not possible to give up wealth, it should be employed in the worship of Bhagavān. If it is done, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa will remove all evils that issue forth from wealth.

Through the initiation of Self-Dedication a disciple dedicates to Śrī Kṛṣṇa everything including his body, members of his family, house, wealth etc., verbally. In order to dedicate, physically, all objects in the worship of Bhagavān as he promised at the time of initiation by holding Tulsī-leaves in his hands, Śrī Vallabhācārya showed the way of worshipping Bhagavān in one's home. But, a problem arises here. Living in house with family requires money and as seen earlier the accumulation of wealth spoils the mind of devotee, what

to do then? As a solution of this problem Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī prescribed the kind of worship with all the pomp of rich food, wealth and embellishment in worship so that a devotee can dedicate to Bhagavān everything as promised. If a disciple of Puṣṭi-sect performs worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in his home by dedicating all his belongings than all that is dedicated to Śrī Kṛṣṇa will become divine. Dedicated things lose their harmfulness. Now, a devotee can use those dedicated things as a leftover of Śrī Kṛṣṇa without fear.

Compassion for Every Being:

Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī's disciple Śrī Nārāyaṇadās was the minister of the Emperor. Once Śrī Nārāyaṇadās employed a disciple of Puṣṭi-sect named: Śrī Viṭṭhaladās. If he got job by showing that he was a disciple of Puṣṭi-sect, it would be the ill-usage of his faith. Thinking so, Śrī Viṭṭhaladās never said he was a disciple of Puṣṭi-sect. Once, Śrī Viṭṭhaladās made a mistake in the job. Śrī Nārāyaṇadās imprisoned him and passed a sentence of lashing one hundred blows. Some days after this incident, Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī happened to come to a nearby village. So, both Śrī Nārāyaṇadās and Śrī Viṭṭhaladās accidentally gathered before Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī. Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī saw the signs of blows on the body of Śrī Viṭṭhaladās while he was having meal. When asked, he told Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī everything that had happened. On hearing this, Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī scolded Śrī Nārāyaṇadās: "No matter if you did not know him a disciple of Puṣṭi-sect; you, at least, knew that he is a living being. Such cruelty does not behave

a Vaiṣṇav. A disciple of the Puṣṭi-sect should be merciful towards every being".

Composition of Works:

Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī composed independent works like for the better understanding of the doctrines of the Path of Puṣṭi. As Śrī Vallabhācārya's commentary on the Brahma-sūtra was not available completely, Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī wrote the commentary on the remaining Sūtras. The style of Śrī Vallabhācārya's writing is compact, it says much more in a few words. For this reason Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī wrote commentaries on various principal works of Śrī Vallabhācārya so that nobody can misinterpret the doctrines of Śrī Vallabhācārya.

Bhāṣya on Brahma-sūtras, which Śrī Vallabhācārya could not complete.

Commentary on Gāyatrī Mantra Bhāṣya

Commentary on Yamunāṣṭakam of Śrī Vallabhācārya

Commentary on Siddhāntamuktāvalī of Śrī Vallabhācārya

Commentary on Navaratnam of Śrī Vallabhācārya

Vidvan-māṇḍanam

Bhaktihetunirṇaya

Bhaktihaiṁsa

Gītātāparyam

Letters to his elder brother

Letters to his sons

Various 'Vijñapti'

Vrajacaryāṣṭapadī
 Svapna - darśanam
 Gupta - rasa
 Rakṣa - smaranam
 Chatuḥślokī
 2nd Catuḥślokī
 Utsava - nirṇaya etc.
 Śṛṅgāra - rasa - maṇḍanam

STOTRAS :

Śrī Sarvottama - stotram
 Śrī Vallabhaṣṭakam
 Śrī Sfurat - kṛṣṇa-āpremāmṛtam
 Four Āryā
 Two Paryāṅka
 Śrī Yamunāṣṭapadī
 Bhujāṅga - prayatāṣṭakam
 Śrī Rādhā - prārthanā - catuḥślokī
 Śrī Gokulaṣṭakam
 Śrī Lalita - tribhaṅgī - stotram
 Śrī Svāminī - prārthanā
 Śrī Svāminī - stotram etc.

Pilgrimages :

Along with the writing of doctrinal and devotional works Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī went to pilgrimage to show the devotional path of Puṣṭi to divine Puṣṭi-beings. No other means of carriages for pilgrimage were available at that time except chariots and carts. Even in such condition he went from

Vraj to visit Dvārakā at the farthest end of Gujarat State for not less than six times. Śrī Dvārakādhiśa asked Śrī Vallabhācārya to excavate Him from the well in Lādavā village near Dvārakā and enshrine in an empty temple of Dvārakā. Bhagavān Śrī Dvārakādhiśa at present seated in an island: Śāṅkhoddhāra (Bet - Dvārakā). On account of Śrī Vallabhācārya's passion for Śrī Dvārakādhiśa, Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī also was attracted towards Śrī Dvārakādhiśa. This was the reason why Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī so frequently visited Dvārakā. During these pilgrimages he took a number of divine beings in his refuge. Among his disciples there were people from different classes and societies. He took in his refuge people like thieves, prostitutes, hunters, fishermen etc. and turned them to the path of Puṣṭi. He took in his refuge and uplifted people born in the casts like Muslim, Pathan etc. The effulgent character of Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī can be seen in detail in book '252 Vaiṣṇavavārtā' and devotional songs of the disciples.

To eternal abode :

Thus, during his time of manifestation of 72 years Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī unceasingly persevered for the all-round promotion of the sect. Knowing that his mission on the earth was over, he entered the cave of mount Girirāja and disappeared.

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1. Wealth, by all means be abandoned;
 if it's not possible to abandon it,
 be it used in the worship of Bhagavān,
 Kṛṣṇa is remover of evils all.

Śrī Yamunājī

Manifestation for the upliftment of devotees:

The arrival of Śrī Yamunājī is particularly for enhancing the sentiment of devotion for Bhagavān in people who are endowed with the sentiment of Puṣṭi-devotion by Bhagavān. Hence, Śrī Vallabhācārya praises Śrī Yamunājī in the hymn of 'Śrī Yamunāṣṭakam' by saying: 'Bhuvanapāvanīm'. It means "One who purifies the earth". Commenting on this 3 Śrī Harirāyacaraṇa says that the epithet: "the purifier of the earth" means that Śrī Yamunājī is the purifier of the earth in the form of the bodies of the Puṣṭi-beings. Hence, if any ignorant Puṣṭi-being drinks the water of Śrī Yamunājī or bathes in it with deep faith and without any worldly or other-worldly desires, Śrī Yamunājī bestows upon him the devotion of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The Greatness of Śrī Yamunājī:

Śrī Yamunājī witnessed various divine pastimes, Śrī Kṛṣṇa played at the time of His incarnation. At that time Bhagavān, frequently, had contact with Śrī Yamunājī through bath and drink of the water of Śrī Yamunājī. So, at the very touch of the water of Śrī Yamunājī the devotee experiences the thrill of the touch of Bhagavān Himself. Moreover, because of the touch of the feet of Bhagavān the dust of the banks

of Śrī Yamunājī has been endowed with so much greatness and significance that even by its touch anti-devotional sentiments are removed from us.

Effulgence:

Śrī Yamunājī has attributes similar to those of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Hence, Śrī Vallabhācārya has extolled in the hymn of 'Śrī Yamunāṣṭakam' effulgence that is conducive to Puṣṭi devotees.

1. Śrī Yamunājī is the bestower of all accomplishments of the devotional path of Puṣṭi.
2. Śrī Yamunājī enhances the devotee's devotion in Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
3. Śrī Yamunājī removes all obstacles that stand as a wall between the Puṣṭi beings and Bhagavān.
4. The attribute of Śrī Yamunājī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa being similar Śrī Yamunājī easily establishes the relation of the being with Bhagavān.
5. Śrī Yamunājī destroys devilishes that have entered into being by the import of the age of Kali.
6. Just as the devotees of Vraja had obtained Bhagavān's love by worshipping Śrī Yamunājī, similarly Puṣṭi-beings, too, can obtain Bhagavān's love by reverently drinking its water and bathing into it.
7. Śrī Yamunājī is the bestower of newness (divinity) to the body of a Puṣṭi-being so as to be fitting in the worship of Bhagavān.

8. The touch of Śrī Yamunājī's water is similar to that of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Bhagavān has placed devotional sentiment of Puṣṭi in the divine beings but so long as Bhagavān does not wish to manifest or enhance the devotional sentiment in them, it does not have its manifestation. Sometimes Bhagavān Himself does this type of grace, or sometimes through a preceptor, a devotee or through deity like Śrī Yamunājī. Just as a child obtains the favour of father by pleasing its mother, similarly, the favour of the supreme Father Śrī Kṛṣṇa can be obtained by pleasing Śrī Yamunājī who is like a mother to all Puṣṭi - beings. Hence, singing her praise in the hymn of 'Śrī Yamunāṣṭakam' Mahāprabhu writes:

*¹ Ananta - guṇa - bhūṣite śiva - virañci - deva - stute
Ghanāghana - nibhe sadā dhruva - parāśrābhīṣṭade;
Viśuddha - mathurāṭaṭe sakala - gopa - gopī - vṛte
Kṛpājaladhisaṅśrite mama - manaḥ sukhaṁ bhāvayaḥ*

Meaning: Śrī Yamunājī is endowed with endless attributes. Gods like Śiva and Brhamā who have been longing to behold Śrī Kṛṣṇa extol her. Śrī Yamunājī looks as beautiful-black as the clouds in the monsoon season. Śrī Yamunājī is the bestower of the best outcome to Dhruva and Parāśara who perform austerities on the bank of Śrī Yamunājī. Śrī Yamunājī on whose bank the city of Mathurā is situated always remains surrounded by the devotees of Vraja. O Śrī Yamunājī! You who are always eager to mingle into the ocean of Grace: Śrī Kṛṣṇa,

grace me so that I may have happiness in my mind.

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1. Embellished with endless attributes,
Extolled by Śiva, Brhmā and other gods,
Looking black as clouds
Bestower of the best to Dhruva and Parāśara
On whose bank pure Mathurā city is there
Surrounded by Gops and Gopīs all
One that mingles into the ocean of grace
Grace me that my mind be happy

Book for further reading :

Śrī Yamunāṣṭakam.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Demonical beings cannot know of Bhagavān:

The beings whom Bhagavān does not grant his devotion or liberation from births and deaths are called 'Ṛavāhī' or 'Āsurī' i.e. demonic beings. As against this beings whom Bhagavān grants devotion or liberation are called 'divine'. Says Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā:

“Demonic beings do not comprehend me as the Supreme-Brahma. On the other hand, since I am manifested with the human body, they recognize me as an ordinary human being or a great man, at the most. As they are ignorant due to Māyā, my nescient power, they can not have true knowledge that of mine. Because of their ignorance they become doers of evil deeds, insensible and mean. And, therefore, these demonic people do not take refuge in me”.

Acquisition of Bhagavān's knowledge after removal of ignorance:

So wondrous is the charactor of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa that even men of great learning and deities like Indra, the god of gods, fail to know him, what to talk of ordinary beings?

This can be understood more clearly with this anecdote from Śrī Bhāgavat-Purāṇa:

Śrī Nandarāyājī and all the inhabitants of Vraja used to perform worship of Indra every year. So Indra had become proud. Once Śrī Kṛṣṇa thought: “How strange it is that when I, the God of gods, dwell in Vraja, the inhabitant of Vraja take refuge in other gods! I shall have to do something so that they may give up their refuge in other gods”. Śrī Kṛṣṇa persuaded all “We are dwellers of forests and mountains. Cows are our true wealth. We earn our livelihood by forests and cows. Where from will it rain if there are no mountains and forests? So, let us worship Mount Govardhan”. With the conformity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, people of Vraja began preparation to worship Mount Girirāj. As soon as Indra knew it, he became red with wrath. He commanded clouds: “Only I am god. The inhabitants of Vraja have insulted me persuaded as they are by an ordinary proud man like Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Forthwith, destroy the whole of Vraja”.

Commanded by Indra, clouds began to pour heavy rain on Vraja with terrible thunder and lightning. The whole Vraja was as if drowned

in the torrential rain. The helpless Vraja dwellers went to refuge in ŚrīKṛṣṇa and began to pray. ŚrīKṛṣṇa thought that Vraja dwellers are now free from the refuge in other gods, and their refuge in Him has become firm, so, in order to protect Vraja dwellers and destroy the pride of Indra, ŚrīKṛṣṇa raised the huge Mount Govardhana on one hand just as a small child raises an umbrella in his hand without any effort. All the inhabitants of Vraja came up beneath the mount alongwith their cows, children and wealth. Indra poured tumble rain for seven days but Vraja was well and good in the protection of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. At last Indra realized the divinity of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. He found himself guilty and became free from pride. He fell at the feet of ŚrīKṛṣṇa and begged pardon for his offence. ŚrīKṛṣṇa excused Indra and said :

“A being blinded by pride of his trivial power and wealth, could not see that I always stand ready to punish. But, I slowly take away wealth prestige and all belongings of a person upon whom I want to shower my grace. By the lost of wealth etc. a man develops detachment from the worldly matters and gets attached with Me. Your pride has now been destroyed. Now, rule over heaven without keeping any pride!”.

Thus, we have seen that divine beings, too, become void of knowledge of Bhagavān and His Līlā because of sudden outburst of demonic sentiments like greed, infatuation, jealousy, pride, anger, lust etc. So, in the Gita Bhagavān says :

Among thousands of people, only a few make efforts to have accomplishment. And among those who make efforts only a few can know me in the true sense.

What makes difficult in acquiring knowledge of Bhagavān ? In the Gita Bhagavān Himself answers to it :

“I cover up with Māyā (nescient power) intellect of those demonic men whom I do not wish to have my knowledge. Hence, being ignorant they are not able to know me.

One can know Bhagavān only to that extent to which Bhagavān removes his ignorance. Just as we can see that much part of the sun as the clouds hiding it begins to move before our eyes.

The knowledge and attainment of Bhagavān through devotion :

At various places in Purānas it can be seen that seeker of knowledge, sages and Munis undergo austerities for innumerable years to know and obtain Bhagavān and yet

they fail. The inhabitants of Vraja had not adopted any kind of means like sacrificial actions, charity, rites, austerities etc., for the attainment of Bhagavān and yet Bhagavān Himself incarnated amidst them. Why so ?

Being a Supreme Brahma, ŚrīKṛṣṇa is an overriding entity above all the natural or supernatural phenomenon. Like Brahmā, Śiva or Indra; ŚrīKṛṣṇa is not duty-bound to give a glance or fruit by means such as sacrifice, rites or recitation of Mantra etc. And hence, efforts that are made to know or attain ŚrīKṛṣṇa with pride of being self-sufficient, do not become successful. But if ŚrīKṛṣṇa graces one, he can obtain ŚrīKṛṣṇa and His Devotion like the inhabitants of Vraja, without even adopting any kind of means. Irrelevant of the grace of God, the pride of self-sufficiency is called 'Sādhana-bhimān' i.e. the pride of Means. Pilgrimage, Mantra, Rites, Spiritual knowledge, Worship etc., are called 'Sādhana'='Means'. One can't know or obtain Bhagavān by any of these means, shown in scriptures, except singleminded devotion attained by the grace of Bhagavān. In the Gita Bhagavān says:

*Nāhm̃ vedair na tapasā na dānena na cejyayā,
Śakya evaṃvidho draṣṭuṃ draṣṭavānasi māṃ yathā;
bhaktyā tvananyayā śakyo aham evaṃvidhorjuna,
jñātuṃ draṣṭuṃ ca tatvena praveṣṭuṃ ca paraṅtapa.*

Meaning: O Arjuna! My look, such as you have had, is not possible by any means like Vedas, austerity, charity,

sacrifice etc. It's only through singleminded devotion that one can have this kind of my knowledge and look. And it's only through devotion that one can enter into Me¹.

Full of mutually contradictory attributes:

In scriptures Bhagavān has been described as 'Viruddha-dharmāśraya'. It means: full or base of mutually contradictory attributes. That is, the Supreme Brahma is all-pervading as it has become the insentient universe, and at the same time it is atom in the form of sentient beings. Similarly, He is the creator and at the same time He Himself is the creation. Likewise, He is both; transcendental and imminent, too. Showing this in the Gītā ŚrīKṛṣṇa says:

*Yaccāpi sarvabhūtānāṃ bījaṃ tad-aham arjuna!
na tad-asti vinā yat syāt mayā bhutaṃ carācaram.*

Meaning: O Arjuna! Whatever cause of the origin of sentient and insentient objects is there, it is only I. There's in this universe no living and lifeless object that is void of Me².

Omnipresent:

One question that arises here is this: Just as the air or space that are 'Vyāpaka' i.e. all-pervading, and that's why they have no shape/form, similarly, scriptures say that Bhagavān is also all-pervading, can we say therefore, that Bhagavān has no form? Can we say, in other words, that Bhagavān is Nirākāra formless? Bhagavān has answered this question in the Gītā by describing his all-pervasiveness and

personal both aspects. Because of His typical character of consisting mutually contradictory attributes, inspite of being all-pervasive, ŚrīKṛṣṇa can take as many forms as He wishes. Conversely, it can be said that inspite of being personal ŚrīKṛṣṇa is all-pervasive also without any logical or practical difficulty. In the form of Akṣara-brahma i.e. creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe; ŚrīKṛṣṇa is all-pervading and, and therefore incomprehensible. After describing His impersonal character of Akṣara-brahma, ŚrīKṛṣṇa gives the description of His personal character in Gītā this way:

*Puruṣaḥ sa praḥ Pārth!
bhaktyā labhyas tvananyayā*

Meaning: One who is greater than even, Akṣara-Brahma, that Supreme Being (ŚrīKṛṣṇa) is obtainable only through devotion⁴.

Names are many but ŚrīKṛṣṇa is one:

In scriptures like Veda, Smṛti, Purāṇa etc., ŚrīKṛṣṇa is narrated by various names such as Para-brahma (The supreme Being), Parameśvara (The Supreme God), Param-ātmā (The Supreme Soul), Bhagavān (That which incarnates on earth), Antaryāmī (The Indweller), Jagadīśa (The Lord of the World) and so on. Not only this, but the narration of gods, goddesses and incarnations as the form of the Supreme Truth in the Purāṇa is to be considered, essentially, as the narration of Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa only. Because, it is ŚrīKṛṣṇa Himself who is playing sports by holding the forms of gods and goddesses.

All the gods and goddesses are believed to be the parts of ŚrīKṛṣṇa in the scriptures:

Sarva - devamayo hariḥ

Meaning: ŚrīKṛṣṇa dwells in all gods.

This means that all gods are parts and parcels of ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

Just as one may praise the hands, the eyes, the nose etc., of some person but, ultimately, it must be considered as the praise of that individual only. Similarly, all gods and goddesses being the part of Bhagavān they are narrated as the Supreme Element. Essentially, it is the narration of Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

The significance of the various names and forms of Bhagavān:

One and single man can be described in many ways from the point of view of his relations occupations etc. For example, a man is a father for his children, a servant for his master, the head for the members of his family, an officer in the office and so on. We can understand that names by which he is called differ with reference to various vocations, acts and relations of the individual, but the person does not differ, he remains the same. Similarly, when ŚrīKṛṣṇa is narrated as creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe, then he is called 'Brahma'. His worshipping form is called Bhagavān, the Supreme Being or ŚrīKṛṣṇa. And, because He controls over the administration of the universe he is

called the Antaryāmī (Indweller) or the Being. And when he alights on the earth in specific form, he is addressed as the incarnation of Nṛasiṃha, Vāmana, Rāma etc. Despite of this wide variety of his names and forms, Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa is only one.

Purpose of manifestation :

Whenever the devilish unrighteous people make havoc on the earth, Bhagavān incarnates for their destruction. When Adharma become potential and Dharma is placed in difficulty, Bhagavān alights on the earth for the establishment of the Dharma; and sometimes Bhagavān takes incarnation on the earth for the upliftment of the devotees.

Kinds of incarnations :

Mostly the President gets his work done through his ministers, ambassadors or other employees. But sometimes when any important work is to be dealt with, the president himself does it. Similarly, Bhagavān, too, does the works of destroying devilish people of establishing the Dharma through his Āveśāvatāra or Aṁśāvatāra. But so far as the upliftment of his devotees is concerned, Bhagavān Himself incarnates on the earth.

Scripture uses word 'Bhagavān' in specific sense. It means: One in whom all the six attributes are in their extremist measure. 1. Aīśvarya (effulgence) 2. Vīrya (heroic) 3. Yaśa (fame) 4. Śrī (Wealth) 5. Jñāna (knowledge) and 6. Vairāgya

(Detachment). Scriptures clearly state that only ŚrīKṛṣṇa is Bhagavān. It is Bhagavān who holds incarnations on the earth in different ways.

1. **Pūrṇa-avatāra :** When Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa, with all his perfect potentialities, alights on the earth that incarnation is called the 'Pūrṇāvatāra' the perfect incarnation. Only ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the perfect incarnation.
2. **Aṁśa-avatāra :** When Bhagavāna Himself does not incarnate but manifest some of his attributes on the earth, that incarnation is called the 'Aṁśāvatāra' i.e. the partial incarnation or the incarnation of the phase or the attribute. For example: Vedavyāsa who composed Vedas and Purāṇs and who divided Vedas in different sections is the incarnation of Bhagavān's attribute of Knowledge.
3. **Āveśa-avatāra :** When Bhagavān enters into someone's body for doing some specific work, it is called 'Āveśāvatāra' incarnation of the Entrance. This kind of entrance is restricted only to some specific work. Paraśurām was the incarnation of Entrance of Bhagavān.

Some ignorant people misunderstand ŚrīKṛṣṇa only as an ordinary incarnation of Bhagavān. Again, some insensible people consider ŚrīKṛṣṇa only as a Man of the Age i.e. Yugapuruṣa or a Great Man or only a Yogeśvara (one who has obtained some accomplishments of Yoga). All these people who are ignorant of the true character of ŚrīKṛṣṇa are recognised

as demonical beings by ŚrīKṛṣṇa Himself. Just as some actor acts on the stage by holding different kinds of dresses, similarly, Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa takes incarnations by holding forms of Varāha, Matsya, Rāma etc., on the stage of the world that he has created. Hence, after describing all incarnations it is said in Bhāgavat :

*Ete cāmśakalā puṁśaḥ
Kṛṣṇastu Bhagavān svayaṁ*

Meaning: All these are partial incarnations and incarnations of phase, ŚrīKṛṣṇa Himself is the Bhagavān, (The perfect incarnation.

Conclusion :

A devotee crosses the worldly sea through hearing, singing and remembering the divine birth and pastimes of Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Hence Bhagavān Says :

*Janma karma ca me divyam evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punr - janma neti māmeti so'rjuna*

Meaning: O Arjuna! One who knows my birth (incarnation) and deeds (pastimes) as divine, really he knows me and obtains me. He will not be born again.

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1. Not by Vedas, and austerity, neither by charity and sacrifice, It's possible to behold Me, as you have beheld me now

Only by unique devotion it's possible, to have of this kind O Arjuna!
knowledge and appearance of me, and by devotion one can enter into Me.

2. Whatever seed of all beings is there it's I Myself, O Arjuna!,
There exists, except me, no object
Sentient as well as insentient.
3. Akṣara-Brahma is the abode of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, destination of the followers of the path of Knowledge, it is the place attained after liberation. It is the cause of the creation, existence and destruction of the universe. The Sat-cit-Ānanda attributes of the Supreme Brahma are manifested in Akṣara-Brahma.
4. That Supreme Being, O Pārth!
is obtainable only thru' devotion.

Books for further reading :

Siddhāntamuktāvalī in Śodśāgrantha.
Mūlanūpaviveka in Prameyaratnārṇava by ŚrīLālūbhāṭṭājī.
Vedāntacintāmaṇi by ŚrīGaṭṭulālājī.

Jīva

We have seen that Brahma is attributive of Sat, Cit and Ānanda (eternal Existence, eternal Consciousness and eternal Bliss). Hiding His attributes of Ānanda when Brahma manifests with the attributes of 'Sat' and 'Cit', that manifested form of Brahma is called 'Jīva' a being. Beings are recognised by the respiratory system. Therefore; trees, beasts, birds, human beings etc. that are endowed with the respiratory system are called 'Being'.

In spite of becoming universe Brahma remains invisible in the universe. Similarly, Brahma is imperceptible in beings even he himself has become beings. This is because the beings have in it only 'Sat' and 'Cit' parts of Brahma manifested, the attribute of 'Ānanda' remains hidden. Therefore, ordinary people do not experience Brahma in individual beings.

Due to concealment of bliss, being is endowed with the body and is subject to birth and death. For this reason the being undergoes the experience of I-ness, My-ness, pleasure and pain. This can be understood easily in the following illustration.

An employee working in the court of a king would receive

royal dress and respect as long as he serve in the court. But at the time when the king would snatch away his title, he would not only cease to receive royal treatment but also he would become lackluster, feeble and discontented. And when the king would again be pleased with him and place him in the court, once again, he would be a courtier and would receive royal treatment. Similarly, when Brahma wishes to create the universe, innumerable beings are separated from Akṣara-brahma like sparks come out from the fire. With the concealment of bliss beings become lusterless, feeble, dependent and miserable. They become dependent and deficient, powerless and painful, ignorant and delude. They cultivate I-ness and My-ness and intense attachment in the worldly things. But when the Supreme Being graces beings, they obtain their original identity.

States of Beings :

Beings have three states :

1. Pure
2. Bonded
3. Liberated.

Pure: when a being is separated from Brahma the attribute of bliss conceals in him. As long as being remains untouched with Avidyā (Nescience) he is called, up to that state, 'pure'.

Bounded: Contact with nescience causes I-ness and My-ness

and the bondage of birth and death to Jīva. In this state the being is called 'bounded' or 'worldly'.

Liberated: When contact with Avidyā, nescience power ends, the being becomes free from the deaths and births. In this state the being is called 'liberated'.

Types of being:

Bhagavān has created this universe for the Līlā (play). As variety is necessary in the play, Bhagavān created beings of different types. They are classified in three types:

1. Pravāhī Beings
2. Maryādā Beings and
3. Puṣṭi Beings.

Deep-rooted god-made inner nature of beings like Pravāha-nature, Maryādā-nature and Puṣṭi-nature compels being to develop interest in the course of life that be fitting to them. Therefore, Pravāhī Beings, bounded by their god-made nature, follow the Pravāhī path. Maryādā beings have liking in the Maryādā Mārga and so they follow that Mārga. Puṣṭi Beings follow Puṣṭi Mārga as they develop interest in the Puṣṭi Mārga.

Identification of Beings:

Just as the original nature of people of different kinds can be recognised by their behaviour, liking, appearance etc., likewise the original nature/potentiality of beings which is

predetermined by Bhagavan also can be recognised by their liking and behaviour. In scriptures like Gītā and Bhāgavat there is a detailed discussion about the types of beings, their behaviour and liking and the result to which they meet.

Pravāhī Beings: Anger, greed, pride, ignorance, jealousy, un-holiness, pleasure lovingness, afflicting others, cruelty etc. are some of features of Pravāhī beings. But deviation from the devotion of Bhagavān can be regarded as the most distinctive characteristic of Pravāhī Beings.

Maryādā Beings: Maryādā beings have no liking for worldly or otherworldly matters. They are having characteristics like chastity, mercy, austerity, holiness, gladness etc. They are interested in the paths of Action, Knowledge and Devotion described in scriptures to obtain liberation.

Puṣṭi Beings: Puṣṭi Beings are not interested in the matter of this world, in the other world or in the liberation. The worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is dearer to them than the obtainment of liberation.

The above mentioned characteristics are generally seen in the respective beings. Sometimes because of the company of Puṣṭi being, Maryādā Beings acquire temporary characteristics of Puṣṭi Beings. Similarly, the characteristics of Pravāhī Beings can also be observed in Puṣṭi Beings and Maryādā beings.

Because of the company reciprocal characteristics that are seen in one another beings are called the Āveśa, outburst of external agency. Perhaps Pravāhī flare may enter into a Puṣṭi Being but his original nature does not change because of the Āveśa. In the same way if Puṣṭi or Maryādā flare enters into Pravāhī beings, Pravāhī beings do not turn up Puṣṭi or Maryādā being only by it.

Thus, by knowing different nature, the deed and the fruit of three kinds of beings, various doubts can be removed.

Further reading :

Puṣṭi-pravaha-maryādābheda in Śoḍaśāgrantha.

Bhaktihaṅsa by Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī

Jīva-Viveka in Prameyaratnārṇava by Śrī Lālūbhatajī

The Universe

Matters like an intrinsic nature of the universe and soul, the origin of creation, liberation, incarnation, Brahma, deities, courses of the attainment of Bhagavan and liberation etc. have been narrated in the scriptures like Veda, Brahmasūtra, Gītā, Bhāgavat etc. As there is no other way to know these things except scriptures, these matters are strictly considered as *Scriptural*. The logic behind this is: as eyes can't deal with the matters like sound, test, smell etc. or as ear can't deal with the matters like colour, shape, smell etc. or as nose can't deal with the matters like sound, colour, test etc. similarly; ordinary senses and intellect of the human-being or scientific instruments can't deal with the scriptural matters. Therefore, as far as these matters are concerned—may it be logically, mathematically or scientifically perfect—no conclusion can be regarded as authentic that goes against the conclusion of the scriptures.

To clarify that it is said that the authenticity of scriptures *specifically* lies in the matters that can't be explained or known through senses, logic, science etc. This is the only universally accepted tradition regarding the means of knowledge among the theists of Bhārat. Therefore, the definition of theist and atheist is also given in the light

of scriptural faith. That is to say one who considers scriptures like Veda, Smṛti, Purāṇa etc. as authentic (in above mentioned matters) is called a *theist*. Whereas, one who does not consider scriptures as authentic (in above mentioned matters) is called an *atheist*.

Purpose of the Universe :

When children playing the game are asked about the purpose behind their playing game they will say that they are playing for fun. Similarly, when scriptures are asked about the purpose of Bhagavān behind creating universe, the answer is the same. Bhagavan has created the universe for playing game, for fun. Bhagavan has no purpose other than fun. To explain these scriptures describe the universe as Bhagavan's ³ Līlā or Krīdā—the play of Bhagavan.

All is Brahma :

Variety is necessary in any game. No variety, no game. Before the creation of the universe there was nothing except the Supreme Being. How can one play in this state even though one wishes? Hence, as Upaniṣad says: Brahma desired, "I am one I may be many". No sooner did Brahma entertain this wish then he acquired the forms of all insentient objects and sentient beings. I.e. Brahma Himself became the insentient objects and sentient beings. Hence, it is said in the Upaniṣad:

Sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ brahma

Meaning: All this (universe) is indeed Brahma.

Creation by Manifestation and Concealment :

Here, a question arises: if all is Brahma, why Brahma is not seen or experienced? A pot is seen as a pot and a horse is seen as a horse. Explaining its reason Śrī Vallabhācārya says that in Upaniṣad Brahma has been narrated as having three attributes namely Sat, Cit and Ānand. 'Sat' means existence, 'Cit' means life or consciousness and 'Ānanda' means endlessness, all pervasiveness, endless attributes that are transcendental or divine etc.

We have seen that Brahma possesses endless divine powers. Among those endless powers there are two powers: 1. the power of manifestation i.e. Āvirbhāva and 2. the power of concealment i.e. Tirobhāva. Brahma creates the universe by using these powers. In other words, when Brahma is manifested with only 'Sat' attribute, hiding the attributes of 'Cit' and 'Ānanda', that manifestation of Brahma is called 'insentient'. The earth, the water, the light, the air and the space are insentient. The whole universe is made up of these five insentient elements. These five elements are also called Pancamahābhūta. As it is Brahma that has become the universe, the universe is considered as Satya/Brahmātmaka real and not illusory. But as the 'Cit' and 'Ānanda' attributes of Brahma are not manifested in the universe and as human intellect is covered by ignorance, ordinary human beings can't see the universe as Brahma. For example, we all know very well that every man has in him the emotions like anger, fear, pleasure etc. in more or less degrees. But whatever

emotion man shows at particular time, only that can be experienced. All other emotions though present in him remain concealed and therefore, cannot be experienced by others. Similarly, though the universe is Brahma, it manifests only 'Sat' attribute and keeps other attributes hidden and so the universe seen as 'insentient'.

We have seen why the universe appears as insentient even when the sentient and blissful Brahma himself has become the universe. However, it is not so that the universe appears insentient to all. For instance, a child who wears green coloured glasses sees everything green and ignorant as he is, he believes that everything is green. But grown up man wearing green coloured glasses, understands very well that though all things are seen green, all are not green. They appear green because of the green spectacles. As against these two cases, a man who hasn't put on spectacles of any colour, sees things in their original colours.

In the same way 1. beings whose ignorance is all removed by Bhagavān sees the universe as Brahma without any kind of elusion. 2. Those whose ignorance is not completely removed by Bhagavān do not see the universe with Brahma. The universe appears to them as perishable and insentient. However, by the study of scriptures they understand that the universe is Brahma and the attributes like origin, destruction, insentient etc. are experienced because of their ignorance. Just as the grown up man with green spectacles sees everything green

but understands that all is not indeed green. Whereas, 3. the people whose ignorance has not at all been removed by Bhagavān are not able to see even that much distinction. So, they—like the child with green goggles, who takes all the things to be green—understands that the universe which is virtually Brahma is insentient and subject to birth and death.

In fact, there is nothing in the universe that is subject to birth and death. Just as when water is boiled it vapourizes and when cooled it again becomes water. Similarly, everything is subject to transformation into manifestation and concealment in accordance with the wish of Bhagavān. Nothing can be produced out of vacuum and nothing can be destroyed to finish. What is possible is to manifest the thing that is unmanifest or to change that manifest into unmanifested.

The God is pervading all over the universe. So, one should never despise it. As willed by Bhagavān, bliss is not manifested in it. So, the seekers of The Bliss do not struggle to find bliss in it. They remain detached to the world and attach themselves to Bhagavān.

Further reading :

Prapañca-Viveka and Khyāti-Viveka in Prameya-ratnāṇava by ŚrīLālūbhatajī.

Mārga

According to the scriptures Bhagavān has created chiefly three kinds of beings. A. Puṣṭi-beings, B. Maryādā-beings and C. Pravāhī / Āsurī-beings. Puṣṭi-beings attain Bhagavān's devotion and liberation through the worship and remembrance of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Maryādā-beings obtain liberation through Vaidic action, knowledge and worship. Whereas Pravāhī / Āsurī-beings undergo birth and death till the very dissolution of the universe. Bhagavan does not grant them devotion or liberation either. Corresponding to these three kinds of beings Bhagavān has also established three paths—

1. Path of Puṣṭi,
2. Path of Maryādā and
3. Path of Pravāha

so that they can obtain their respective fruits through these paths. These paths can be described briefly thus:

A. Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga :

'Puṣṭi' means: grace. An overwhelming grace of Bhagavān through which Puṣṭi-beings receive sentiment of devotion and subsequently become capable to perform devotion of ŚrīKṛṣṇa without keeping any worldly temptations or desire. Only through

the path of devotion one can obtain the Supreme Brahma ŚrīKṛṣṇa; not through the paths of action, knowledge or Upāsana. So, from the viewpoint of fruit, "the devotional path of Puṣṭi" is the best of all paths.

B. Maryādā Mārga :

Scriptures have shown three Paths to obtain liberation. 1. The Path of Karma (action), 2. The Path of Knowledge and 3. The Path of Upāsana. All these three paths are called the Path of Maryādā in Pusti-Bhakti-Sampradaya. 'Maryādā' means: confinement / restriction. As the course of these paths is restricted within the limit of scriptures, they are called 'Maryādā'.

Karma-mārga :

The action like sacrifice etc., shown in the scriptures, are manifestation of the action of Bhagavan. By having such conviction about the nature of Actions one should perform scriptural Actions by being free from temptation of the fruits that can be had of Actions. Along with this one should dedicate fruits of Action to Bhagavan. Some actions are forbidden in scriptures. Such actions should be abandoned. The indispensable (Nitya-Naimittika) actions which are to be performed as 'Daily / regular deeds' and predestined actions which are to be performed according to the occasions should only be done. By doing this, all the bondages resulted from the actions get destroyed and one obtains liberation. Actions performed by the temptation of fruits, obtains perishable fruits

of heaven etc. and not liberation from births and deaths.

Jñāna Mārga :

The path in which liberation (in the form of union with Akṣarabrahma) is being achieved through the means of knowledge shown in scriptures by having detachment and renunciation in all worldly and other worldly matters is called "the Path of Knowledge".

Upāsana Mārga :

In this path one takes initiation of the Mantra of the name of one's favorite God as shown in the scripture of Tantra. By worshipping a God or Goddess as the Supreme Reality through rites of Mantra liberation is achieved. This is called Upāsana-mārga or Maryādābhaktimārga—the Path of 'Upāsana or the Path of Maryādā devotion.

C.Pravāha Mārga:

Beings who are not blessed to follow above spiritual paths have to undergo the vicious circle of birth and death to avail the fruits of their actions. This is called the Path of Pravāha, the endless stream of birth and death.

The beings automatically cultivate interest and faith in those paths for which Bhagavan has chosen them. It means that Bhagavan has chosen one for the path in which he is naturally interested. Hence, the blessedness of human life lies in following the path of one's choice.

Mostly, all Paths have their sub-paths. Sub-paths are known as 'Sampradāyas'. For instance, the Sampradāyas (cults) propounded by ŚrīVallabhācārya is the sub-path of the path of devotion.

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1. To worship as a part of ritual shown in the scriptures like Purāna, Tantra, Upaniṣada etc. in order to attain liberation is called 'Upāsana'. Whereas, the worship that is done out of affection without keeping any desire regarding this world, other world or liberation is called 'Bhakti'.

Further reading :

Puṣṭi-pravāha-maryādābheda in Śodaṣgranth

Bhakti-haṁsa and Bhaktihetu-nirṇaya by ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthajī

Sampradāya

Definition: It's a tradition in which the Mantra of the favourite God's name is given in the initiation to the disciple with the complete knowledge of that religious cult by the Guru for his upliftment is called 'Sampradāya'.

Necessity of the Sampradāya:

In the present fields of education Science, Art and Commerce are the chief branches of learning in Bharat. In Science; Chemistry, Biology, Physiology, Physics etc., are the sub-branches. Similarly, there are sub-branches of learning in Art and Commerce. Every student has no liking for all the branches of learning. For this reason, at higher stage, educational institutions introduce different faculties of education for the students having interest in different branches of learning. The purpose lies behind introducing different sections of education is that the student may concentrate without deviating his mind on the subject of his choice.

In this world Bhagavān has not made all beings of the same nature and liking. Different scriptural Dharma-Sampradāyas have come into existence by the ordainment of Bhagavān to serve an auspicious purpose that beings of different likings may obtain the knowledge of their path and may live their

life accordingly.

What may happen if different Dharma-Sampradāyas do not exist?

Suppose there are no different sections like Science, Art etc. in the field of education. In that case, there remains no scope with students for the advanced study of his favourite subject. Again, he will have to study by force those subjects in which he is not interested. Similarly, if beings of different motives and likings do not find Dharma-Sampradāyas showing their favourite means to attain Bhagavān, how can they progress in their spiritual life? Moreover, Bhagavān has created this world as His playground, and sport cannot take place without variety. For this reason, it is necessary that there be different Sampradāyas for different beings.

Sampradāyas are not Enclosures:

A number of Dharma-Mārgas or Dharma-Sampradāyas of our country are as old as Bhārat's culture itself. Today this false belief is being spread out that our social unity breaks down by different Dharma-Sampradāyas. In a way power-loving political leaders spread jealousy, quarrels and disquiet in the society by exciting groups of labourers, farmers, employees, students, Ādivasīs etc. belonging to different languages, provinces, districts and castes. Should we believe, then, that any language or province etc., is an element that disunites all classes and breaks up the social unity? Or if

we believe in it, how can we be free from it? In fact, different Saṁpradāyas are the centres to provide training of religious courses. They are such types of schools that enhance moral prosperity of the society along with its spiritual promotion. Because of these Saṁpradāyas, sensible people experience all-pervading necessity and well-being of religion in the society and not of disunity and divisibility.

In fact all scriptural Saṁpradāyas have come into being for the people of different interest & nature by the command of Bhagavān. That is what the scripture says. All Saṁpradāyas have got different fields of working like Action, Knowledge, Devotion etc. Hence, ideally, there should not arise any question of conflict, opposition or rivalry of one Saṁpradāya with any other Saṁpradāya. For example, there are innumerable schools throughout the world that impart learning and training of different subjects to the students of different classes and groups. When our social unity and harmony is not endangered by these innumerable schools, how can the social unity and harmony be harmed by our schools of Dharma which can be counted on the tips of our fingers? Hence, it should be understood that the tradition of Bhārata's Dharma - Saṁpradāya is not the symbol of narrowness or divisibility but it is the symbol of universal and all-pervading necessity of Dharma. If one can look into the all-pervasiveness contained in this variety, there remains no reason of any fear or doubt. Thus, true nature and significance of Dharma - Saṁpradāya is discussed.

As it is said, all scriptural Saṁpradāyas have been propounded by the command of Bhagavān for different classes of people. Hence, all Saṁpradāyas are complete, necessary and good in their own ways.

If any one wants to enter into any Dharma-Saṁpradāya, how shall he decide which Dharma-Saṁpradāya will suit him?

It is very easy to decide. What will a student interested in Science and desiring to make advancement in the field of Science do? No doubt, he will seek admission to that school in which the subject of his choice is taught very well. Similarly, one should enter into that Saṁpradāya in which his favourite course of obtaining Bhagavān is taught. But it should be remembered that a clever-wise student seeks admission only to that school which has got recognition from the respective authority. Similarly, one should take care to see that the Saṁpradāya in which he is going to enter is not against the principles of the scriptures like Vedas etc., the bases of Hindu Sanātana Dharma. Moreover, one should never commit an error of following more than one Saṁpradāyas at a time. Traveler who places his legs in two boats can't reach across. Hence, in the Gītā, ŚrīKṛṣṇa says:

*Śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ, paradharmātsvanuṣṭhitāt;
svadharme nidhanam śreyāḥ, paradharmo bhayāvah.*

Meaning: One's own duty is much better even if it is not practiced properly than others' duty that is practiced accurately.

It is better if one has to die for the sake of one's own duty, but to follow other's duty is very dangerous.

In his treatise: Sarvanirṇaya-Nibandha Śrī Vallabhācārya says:

*'Svadharmācāraṇaṁ śktyā
Vidharmācca nivartanaṁ*

Meaning: One should practice one's own Dharma as much as possible, but should keep away from others' Dharma.

Salient features of Saṁpradāya:

Every Saṁpradāya that is well-established and well-thought consists of minimum these four aspects: 1. Philosophical 2. Doctrinal 3. Practical and 4. The aspect of fruit. Corresponding to these four aspects there remain four kinds of instructions of the Ācāryas of Saṁpradāya. We shall discuss all these kinds from the point of view of the philosophy and theology of 'Śuddhādvaita²-Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Saṁpradāya'.

Philosophical Instruction:

What is the supreme truth, what is the nature as well as the origin of beings and the universe, and which kind of relation the Supreme Self has with the sentient beings and the insentient world—the answers in reply to these questions is called Tatvopdeś, the philosophical instruction. For example, ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the progenitor of the universe, none of gods and goddesses or incarnations other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa

are the Supreme Brahma etc. is Tatvopadeśa. Philosophical aspect is the true base of other three aspects for any Saṁpradāya.

Doctrinal Instruction:

The narration of moral rules and regulations for planning practical life on the bases of philosophical thought is called Siddhāntopadeśa—the doctrinal instruction. For example, to perform ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service is the spiritual duty of every being, to resort in any god or goddess other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa is an offence for the disciple of the Puṣṭi-Bhakti sect etc. are the Doctrinal Instructions.

Practical Instruction:

The directions as to how and how not to place doctrine in practical life are given in Vyavahāropadeśa—The Practical Instruction. For example, having initiation of Brahmasambandha from an efficient Guru and enshrining ŚrīKṛṣṇa's Svarūpa (idol) in home, one should perform ŚrīKṛṣṇa's worship with one's own body, mind and wealth. One shouldn't have initiation from an improper Guru and should not perform worship in any public places except at one's home. Worship should not be got performed by other person by offering money and other objects. One should not accept money or any object from any other person for worship.

Instruction regarding the Fruit:

The doctrines and description regarding the fruit—that one obtains after the accomplishment of the course of the

Sampradāya in accordance with its doctrines—is propounded in Falopadeśa—the Instructions regarding the fruit. For example, devotee's mind gets constantly attached to ŚrīKṛṣṇa when he performs the worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa in one's own home with one's own body and wealth. He becomes free from worldly I-ness and My-ness. As against this if 1. ŚrīKṛṣṇa is worshiped at public places like Havelis and temples 2. if the worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is performed with money received from others 3. if the worship is got performed through some other person by making a payment—nobody's mind will be attached to ŚrīKṛṣṇa. The mind of the donor is spoiled with pride. The receiver of money becomes Devalaka—a sinner. The preceptor who performs worship in public-temple or Haveli, later or sooner, becomes a paid worshiper or public servant or govt. servant and ultimately becomes a sinner in the eyes of scripture.

The Internal and External phases of Spiritual course:

Every Sampradāya has two phases of its course: 1. The external Phase and 2. The internal Phase. For a school-student to go to school, to respect the teachers, to wear the uniform etc., are the external phases. While to revise, to discuss and to remember the lessons are the internal aspects. As these two aspects are necessary for obtaining education, so both the External and Internal aspects of the religious course are equally important in any Sampradāya. In the devotional path of Puṣṭi, hearing, singing and remembering ŚrīKṛṣṇa's names, form and Lila are the internal aspects of its course.

Performance of ŚrīKṛṣṇa's worship with one's own body and wealth is the External phase. When these two phases join together, perfection in following the devotional course can be achieved.

No Sampraday No success:

In the constitution of a country there are innumerable laws regarding the matters of income-tax, wealth-tax, theft, agriculture, export etc. Every citizen can't be expert of the constitution of his country. Therefore, if any kind of question or difficulty regarding any of the above matters arises people consult an expert advocate or solicitor in that matter. If people undertake to do anything without consulting such experts or without any legal attestation it could be considered as illegal action on their part. Similarly, in scriptures different kinds of dos and don'ts are narrated keeping in view different types of nature & interest of human beings. A layman cannot decide which of the innumerable dos and don'ts of scriptures are for which men. So, except consulting some religious preacher there remains no way to come to the decision regarding one's course of action. Hence, in scriptures showing the indispensability of Sampradāya it is stated that any action that is done without entering into the Sampradāya meets with failure.

*³Adikṣitasya vā moru, Kṛtāṁ sarvaṁ anarthakam
Paṣuyonim avāpnoti dīkṣāhīno naro mṛtaḥ.*

Meaning: All that is done by a person who does not take

initiation is as good as undone. He does obtain the birth of a beast, without initiation he is no better than a dead man.

Thus, we have seen in all ways what Saṁpradāya is. One who adopts the course of Saṁpradāya by understanding well the philosophical instruction, the doctrinal instruction and practical instruction is excellent. One who adopts the course of Saṁpradāya by knowing only the doctrinal instruction and practical instruction is the medium type. But one who adopts means by obtaining only practical instruction is likely to go astray. Such a seeker is called heinous and lowly type. But a man who is void of the knowledge of Practical instruction is worth no consideration.

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1. One's own Dharma even not practiced well, is better than well-practiced Dharma of others; Death while following one's own Dharma is the best, but to follow Dharma of others is dangerous.
 2. The philosophy of Śrī Vallabhācārya is known by the name of 'Śuddhādvaita' or 'Sākāra-brahmavāda' whereas the religious course that Śrī Vallabhācārya has prescribed is known by the names of 'Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga' or 'Puṣṭi-Mārga'.
 3. What one who is not initiated does goes all as undone and obtains the birth of a beast and be then as good as dead.

Further reading :

Satsidhāntamartanda by Śrī Gaṅṅulālājī.

Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga

In this universe Bhagavān has made some beings having the nature of Puṣṭi. As Bhagavān has created all beings with specific purpose, Puṣṭi-beings are created particularly for performing the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. But, because of their separation from Bhagavan, Puṣṭi-beings had been attached to worldly matters like other Pravāhī beings and forgotten their duty to perform worship. Just as in holidays students give themselves much to sport and games, and forget their schools and books.

With the impart of Kali-age true Dharma was covered up as a number of fraud and hypocritical beliefs sprung up in the name of Vedic scriptures. People became partakers of sin by practicing forbidden and irreligious things against Vedas. People were giving up their religion by force as they were terrorized by cruel Muslim rulers. How could simple and straightforward people follow Dharma in that situation! How could they get the knowledge of their Dharma! Seeing such helpless condition of the people some learned and prestigious but greedy Brāhmaṇas started exploiting Dharma for the political & monetary benefit. For this reason, Dharma got perverted to such an extent that people ceased to understand what Dharma was and what Adharma was. As a helpless

man becomes impatient, intolerant and greedy, the ignorant people began to do deeds for wealth and prestige under the temptation to earn more with a little labour. Moreover, Dharma which is considered as a way of living life and devotion in the culture of Bhārat, ceased to be so and became the means of public exhibition, prestige for title and means to obtain wealth.

At the end, Brahmanas, too, lost the knowledge of Dharma and made God's worship the source and business to earn their livelihood through the medium of temples and under the pretext of Dharma. Infatuated by the perishable worldly fruits obtainable by the worship of gods and goddesses, people forgot pure and desireless Puṣṭi devotion of the Supreme Brahma ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Again, the true meaning of the scripture like ŚrīBhāgavat in which Puṣṭi-Devotion is narrated, remained hidden because of the popularity of arbitrary interpretations. If there is nobody to save the man being carried away in the current of a river, he has to be dragged helplessly. In the current of the age of Kali Puṣṭi-beings too began to be dragged.

Bhagavan saw that the life of beings whom he had created for performing His worship was wasted away. So He ordained ŚrīVallabhācārya to manifest the Mārga of His worship and to uplift Puṣṭi beings who were drown away in the flow of the time. The path of Devotion and Resort of ŚrīKṛṣṇa which ŚrīVallabhācārya proclaimed is known as 'Puṣṭi-Bhakti-

Mārga' — the devotional path of Puṣṭi.

If the devotee desires to obtain the worldly and otherworldly fruit or liberation, such devotion is not called 'Puṣṭi-Devotion'. Hence, devotional path of Puṣṭi is to be defined as "the path in which ŚrīKṛṣṇa's devotion is obtained and performed through the grace of ŚrīKṛṣṇa without any desire". One can have very good understanding of Puṣṭi-Devotion from the character of Būlā Miśra, the disciple of ŚrīVallabhācārya.

Būlā Miśra had born in a Brāhmaṇa family. Once his father reprimanded him for being devoted to pleasure-loving life. So he felt a longing to attain learning. He worked very hard but did not succeed. At the end he thought that everything happens according to the will of Bhagavān. So he began to recite Viṣṇu! Viṣṇu! Viṣṇu! in order to please Bhagavān. He abandoned taking food and water. Bhagavān was pleased and manifested in front of Būlā Miśra. He commanded him to go to ŚrīVallabhācārya. Thus Būlā came into contact with ŚrīVallabhācārya. "You are blessed, Būlā!" ŚrīVallabhācārya said, "You have had Bhagavān's appearance in this very life". Būlā Miśra requested "Gracious lord! It is your grace that I beheld Bhagavān, but I am still void of the bliss of Bhagavān i.e. Bhajanānanda. I can obtain it only when you grace me". In order to test him ŚrīVallabhācārya tried to avoid it "Now what more have you to do? You have had the very look of Bhagavān!" Hearing that Būlā Miśra entreated. "I want no liberation, but I want devotion. It's

only for this reason that I have come to your refuge”.

For having looks of Bhagavān many disciples of the Puṣṭi cult keep wondering in temples and by having look of Bhagavān once a day, they feel the satisfaction of doing all their duties. But such looks-seekers are not fit for entering into Puṣṭi-Mārga. The very purpose of ŚrīVallabhācārya’s manifestation is to turn Puṣṭi-beings to the worship and resort of Bhagavān at their home. There were innumerable ŚrīKṛṣṇa temples throughout India before ŚrīVallabhācārya for those Darśana-seekers who were satisfied only with the look of Bhagavān once a day. Again, Bhagavān has manifested Puṣṭi-Beings only for performing His worship. Hence, those who are Puṣṭi-beings must be interested in the worship of Bhagavān. How such Puṣṭi-beings can have satisfaction only with the Darśana? Those who feel satisfaction only with the Darśana can never be Puṣṭi-beings. How can those who are not Puṣṭi beings be allowed to enter into Puṣṭi-Marga? With this thought in mind ŚrīVallabhācārya first tried to avoid Būlā Miśra and said “You have already had Darśana of Bhagavān. What more have you to do now?” But Būlā Miśra was a true Puṣṭi-being. What satisfaction he could have only with Darśana? Eventhough he might have had divine appearance of Bhagavan, the first and foremost duty of the Puṣṭi-being is to perform the worship of Bhagavān with devout sentiment of surrendering everything to Bhagavān. If he doesn’t perform the worship, his very existence goes in vain. Hence, Būlā Miśra said: “It is your grace that I have beheld Bhagavān but what I want

is devotion of Bhagavān. Hence, I have come to your refuge”.

Thus, the devotional path of Puṣṭi is the Path of worship and devotion of Bhagavān. In this path the worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the means, and the fruit to be obtained through it is also the worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

Further reading :

84 Vaiṣṇava Vāratā by ŚrīGokulanāthajī

Bhagavad-āśraya

In all the matters, impossible or possible, regarding this world or the hereafter world or even related to the devotion only ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the only protector and support. Sentiment such as this is called 'the refuge' in the devotional path of Puṣṭi.

The significance of the refuge:

At various places in history books and Purāṇas the significance of the resort in Bhagavān has been narrated.

In ancient time there was a wicked and sinful demon king named Hiranyakaśipu. His youngest son was Prahlāda. He was a true devotee of Bhagavān. While sleeping and sitting, eating and drinking, he used to envisage only Bhagavān. As he grew a little older, his father appointed two demon preceptors to educate him. But he could not attach his mind to the education of politics. One day Hiranyakaśipu asked Prahlāda "My son! What do you like the most?" Prahlāda knew that his father was an enemy of Bhagavān and the devotees of Bhagavān as Bhagavān had killed his father's wicked brother, Hiranyākṣa. Yet he answered very boldly.

Leaving aside all worldly matters that may lead far from Bhagavān, one must take refuge only in Bhagavān. This is the only thing that is the best in the world.

On hearing this answer Hiranyakaśipu became red with anger. He called for Prahlād's teachers and asked them to teach him carefully. In spite of their careful teaching Prahlād's mind remained attached to Bhagavān.

After some days Hiranyakaśipu asked him the same question again.

Prahlāda replied:

"I consider that learning as the best learning by which one can learn to express devotion to Bhagavān with all its nine kinds such as ¹hearing, ²singing, ³remembering, ⁴worshipping, ⁵revering, ⁶bowing, ⁷servicing, ⁸loving as a friend and ⁹declaring the surrender of everything.

Hearing this Hiranyakaśipu's anger knew no bounds. He at last decided to do away with Prahlāda. To kill him he got him crushed under the foot of an elephant, bitten by a poisonous serpent, thrown from the mountain, thrown into the sea; but Prahlāda whose only refuge was Bhagavān had not the least harm. When he was thrown into the fire he said:

To recite the name of Bhagavān is the only cure to keep off all kinds of miseries. How can one who-keeps uttering the name of Bhagavān have fear of any kind! Look, father! The fire which burns everything has become as cold as water at my body's touch because of my uttering the name of Bhagavān.

The essence of these words of Prahlāda is that there is so much power in the resort of Bhagavān that all worldly and other worldly powers become quite insignificant. And one who resorts to ŚrīKṛṣṇa can easily attain him.

Don't trust time :

Giving advice to demon-childern Prahlāda said:

Among all births it is only the human birth in which the being can take recourse for obtaining the Supreme Self. Only fortunate souls can obtain such a human body. Hence, to take resort in the lotus-feet of Bhagavān is the only Dharma in the human birth.

Prahlāda further said :

Generally man lives for one hundred years. Half of his life is spent in sleeping. The childhood passes in ignorance. Thereafter some years are

spent in sports and games. When he grows up, many years are spent in worries of the worldly life, and when he is old, he is not in position to do anything as his sense and organs of sense become feeble and inactive.

Thus, it becomes clear that "old age is the proper time to worship God" is a bad belief. How ignorant are the people who believe in such things! The life of such people passes in waiting for suitable time. Hence it is said :

*^aYuvaiva dharmśīlaḥ syād
animittam hi jīvanam
falānāmiva pakvānām
sadā hi patānād bhayam.*

Meaning: Man should start to follow Dharma in his youth itself. There is no certainty of life at all (This is said about those who believe "We shall sing glories of Bhagavān and dance in old age") Just as a ripe fruit can fall off the tree any time, so, the old man remains in constant fear of death. In other words, an old man dies at any time.

An interesting incident explaining this very matter has been narrated in Mahābhārata.

Once a Brāhmaṇ came to Yudhiṣṭhira to ask for alms. Yudhiṣṭhira asked him to come the next day at the time when alms were given.

Surprised at hearing this Bhīma began to celebrate a festival by playing the drum and bugle. Hearing this uproar Yudhiṣṭhira asked Bhīma why he did so. Bhīma said, “you have got victory over time so this festival is celebrated in joy of it. You asked that poor Brāhmaṇ to come the next day to receive alms. So you are sure to live at least upto the next day. I am glad to know it”. Yudhiṣṭhira realized his mistake. Nobody has control over time. He called Brāhmaṇa and gave him as much help as he needed.

The moral that results from this incident is one should attach himself to the service and remembrance of Bhagavān without keeping trust upon time.

Āśraya (The Resort):

The word ‘Āśraya’ has two meanings:

1. Āśraya = The action of taking resort / support and
2. Āśraya = The person or the object that is resorted.

For example, when any drowning person catches hold of wood, it is said that he has taken resort/support of wood. Similarly, when a person getting wet in rain takes shelter under a roof, it is said that he has taken resort of a roof. In these examples ‘resort’ means: the action of taking resort.

The above examples explain this meaning too. Wood or a roof itself can be called ‘the resort’ or ‘the support’. In other words we can say that the land by whose support we stand can also be called ‘the resort’.

Bhagavān is the resort of all:

Explaining his divinity in the Gītā Bhagavān says to Arjuna.

O Arjuna! As pearls are strung on a thread the whole universe of animate and inanimate objects is sustained by taking resort in me.

It comes by these words of Bhagavān that only Bhagavān is the resort of the whole creation. If Bhagavān may not be the resort(protector and support)the very existence of the universe is not probable. From this point of view, Bhagavān is the resort of all whether one may or may not take His resort voluntarily. So it follows that to take resort in Bhagavān is only to recollect the forgotten fact that Bhagavān is the resort.

Remembrance of resort is necessary:

One may believe or not but Bhagavān does remain as the resort. When this is the case, why should one remember his resort i.e. Bhagavān?

Thinking so will be an offence on the part of human being. For example, out of the two children, one is obedient

and polite to his parents whereas another one is not so. Now think, which of these two children will be the dearest to the parents? Naturally, it is the first child! From this example it is to be understood that parents do facilitate their children with good food, water, education, dwelling etc. yet the child who is cultured will respect, love and serve his parents naturally and will try to please them without caring for all such things. Similarly, Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the father of all beings. Hence, it is the first and the final duty of every being to remember and worship ŚrīKṛṣṇa—the father of the universe, the supreme self.

Just as parents become pleased with those children who observe their duties, Bhagavān also becomes pleased and satisfied if beings may observe their duties to serve and remember Him. Hence, in his treatise: 'Navaratna', ŚrīVallabhācārya says:

It is my conviction that the beings should go in the shelter of Bhagavān and should always recite "ŚrīKṛṣṇaḥ śraṇam mama".

In the commentary on this verse Prabhucaraṇa ŚrīVithalānāthājī says that -

If the Aṣṭākṣara-Mantra is not recited constantly the demoniac sentiments will certainly enter into us.

Pride of being the doer is the cause of worldly pleasure & pain :

Because of demoniac sentiments a person begins to believe: "Whatever is happening to me at present, Whatever had happened to me in the past and whatever will happen to me in the future, I am the cause of all". On account of such pride of being the doer one begins to experience the worldly pleasures and pains.

Worldly pleasure is also afflictive :

Every body knows the painfulness of the worldly matters like death of the member of family, illness, unfulfilment of desire etc. The scriptures say that worldly pleasures that are obtained from the heaven, wealth, women, children or food too, ultimately produce pain.

When money is spent, one has to earn. Similarly, when virtues are over the enjoyer of heavenly pleasures has to return to the earth—the world of death. A person accumulates money by working hard and suffering hardship and sees dreams to enjoy it. Some people die away without availing it. Some people do not desire to spend the collected wealth out of greed while some others have to suffer the misfortune of losing the wealth within no time. One's wife and children too are favoured as long as they behave according to one's desire. Moreover, wife and children that are favourable do not always live together. Later or sooner one has to part with them. A delicious dish gives pleasure as long as one's body is healthy. In old age when teeth fall off, one has

to be satisfied only with the flavour of food. In short, any worldly pleasure does not remain for all the times. So the very thing that is taken as pleasant becomes the cause of pain. So it is better that one tries to obtain indestructible and divine bliss of Bhagavān's worship and remembrance than to waste time in obtaining worldly pleasures that turn painful at the end.

Warrilessness By the resort to Bhagavān :

We have seen how worldly pleasures and sorrows are painful. If one wishes to be free from this pain there is only one go: leaving aside the pride of being the doer one should go to the refuge in Bhagavān.

One who surrenders to Bhagavān whole heartedly becomes free from worldly pride. His worldly heart is transformed into divine heart. Now he does not retain the worldly pride such as "It is I who does all this, I am the cause of all that happens to me". Now he experiences that—

"All belongs to Bhagavān, that everything in this world is only for Bhagavān. He is the cause of all that happens. In fact I am not the doer of whatever I have been doing. It is Bhagavān who directs me to do all this."

By developing such kind of sentimental detachment from all the worldly matters when one takes refuge in Bhagavān

he goes beyond application of worldly pleasure and pain. Let us see how it happens.

After giving a thing to some other person that we possess, henceforth we do not keep any kind of affection and attachment in that thing. We get detached from it. As we do not now feel the sentiments of possessiveness and affection for that thing we do not feel pleasure or pain for anything that happens to it. Whether it remains or not, whether it is well maintained or not, or whether it gets broken or not. Similarly, those who have surrendered, sentimentally as well as physically, all their belongings to Bhagavān along with their own selves no more take these things as theirs. Therefore, they do not experience the hardships their bodies undergo, or feel that they have to suffer pains regarding their family, house, wealth etc. Moreover, devoted persons do not feel any kind of I-ness or My-ness not only into the members of their family, house etc. but also into their own body which is, by any way, not attached with Bhagavān.

We can see this in the characters of the devotees. ŚrīVallabhācārya's disciple Sūradāsaḥ was blind by birth. Kumbhanadāsaḥ was so poor that he did not possess even a small mirror for the purpose of affixing Tilaka on his forehead. Padmanābhadāsaḥ had to pass days only by eating gram. In such adverse circumstances they believed themselves to be the happiest beings on the earth. In order to kill the devotee Prahlāda, his demon-father got him thrown from

the mountain, pierced by spears, crushed under the foot of an elephant, thrown into the pan of boiling oil. What pains he did not inflict upon Prahāda? Yet Prahāda was not affected by them the least. He enjoyed all these things knowing them as the sports of Bhagavān. The great devotee Jaḍabharatjī was caught by thieves for offering him as a sacrifice to the goddess, yet it had no effect upon Jaḍabharatjī. Hence, it has been said in ŚrīBhāgavata :

It is not a thing of wonder that those who have taken refuge in the lotus feet of Bhagavān, the saviour from all kinds of calamities, are not afflicted even though they are led to the scaffold.

We can understand from this that a person who has firm faith in Bhagavān as his resort, does not feel the pang of pain though mountains of pains be inflicted upon him. Why does it happen so? Because those who are fully dependent upon Bhagavān and who have surrendered to Bhagavān by all means are void of pride of being the independent doers of the actions and enjoyers of their fruits. Hence, they do not experience the pleasure and pain of whatever actions they do or whatever pleasure they enjoy. Those who have not surrendered to Bhagavān are proud of their being independent doers and enjoyers. As a result of this they undergo the affliction of pleasure and pain.

He doesn't remember those who don't remember Him :

It is but natural that we very often remember the person for whom we have some feelings. Whereas we do not remember the person who is not concerned with us. This happens with Bhagavān too. One who constantly remembers Bhagavān is considered as keenly connected with Bhagavān. Also, as we become partakers in all situations of a being whom we love, similarly, Bhagavān too, becomes the partaker at all joyful and sorrowful occasions in the life of a being who remembers Him incessantly. Hence, in the Gītā Bhagavān says :

(From the point of view of the essential nature of the universe) All beings are equal to me. Neither anyone is my enemy nor my friend but (so far as the Līlā-sport is concerned) whosoever worships me and remembers, is in me and I am in him. (That is to say Bhagavān does not consider him different from him, but inseparable from him).

And that is why Bhagavān does not remember those beings who do not take refuge in him and remember Him. For such beings Bhagavān says in the Gītā :

Those insensible mean-minded demoniac people whose knowledge has been usurped by Avidyā-Māyā and who are doers of devilish

deeds do not come to my refuge. Such people obtain demoniac family from birth to birth. Without obtaining me they finally meet their downfall.

Remember Bhagavān in happiness too:

People, usually, remember Bhagavān in the days of their adversity but forget Him in prosperity. True devotee of Bhagavān does not behave in such manner. Bhagavān considers such people as selfish-minded and not His devotees. Bhagavān considers only that person as his real devotee who always remembers him thinking that "Bhagavān has given me this happiness" even when he is in his happy state.

No time-Bar in remembrance of Bhagavān:

Unlike an employee a true devotee of Bhagavān does not consider the worship and remembrance of Bhagavān as his duty, obligation or custom. He does not believe that the matter ends by uttering Bhagavān's name few times in the morning, at noon and in the evening or, daily / occasionally visiting religious establishment. The true hearted devotee believes that the time and the work in which Bhagavān is not remembered, that time is no time and that work is no work. Hence, one should try to spare as much time as possible for the service and remembrance of Bhagavān and should not prescribe any time-limits for it. Regarding this Bhagavān says in the Gītā:

Hence, remember me at all times even while performing your worldly and Vaidic duties. Those who have dedicated their mind and intellect to Me will certainly obtain Me. Entertain no doubt in your mind.

Remembrance should be spontaneous and natural:

A true devotee of Bhagavān enjoys every incident of his life in this world as the sport of Bhagavān. No matter whether it is pleasant or painful. Therefore, he does not find any difference between a friend and a foe, blame and praise, sunshade and sunshine, honour and insult. Again it is not for any fear, temptation or rivalry that such a devotee remembers Bhagavān. Remembrance of Bhagavān is wound in the life of a devotee as naturally as inhaling and exhaling of the breath. Arjuna is the best illustration of it.

Once Pārvatī requested to Śiva to grace her with the appearance of the devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Śiva brought Pārvatī to Hastināpur for the appearance of Arjuna. Entering the palace they came to know that Arjuna is taking sleep. Thinking that it is not proper for him to wake up Arjuna, Śiva called ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Bhagavān came there and entered the sleeping-room of Arjuna to inform him of the arrival of Śiva-Pārvatī. As Bhagavān's return was delayed Śiva called for Brahmājī. Same thing happened with

Brahmājī. Now Śiva remembered Nārada. But there who went inside did not come back! Seeing this, Śiva-Pārvatī also went to the sleeping-room. They were wondered by seeing an amazing scene. There they heard the sound of ŚrīKṛṣṇ ŚrīKṛṣṇ ŚrīKṛṣṇ coming out of every pore of Arjun's body. Thrilled by his friend's devotion ŚrīKṛṣṇ was massaging Arjun's legs. Four-faceted Brahmājī was uttering Vedas and Nārada was singing glories of Bhagavān playing upon his Vīṇā. Śiva-Pārvati felt to have been blessed by having the appearance of such wonderful Kṛṣṇa-devotedness of Arjuna.

How good it is if Bhagavān's name is called so spontaneously!

Bhagavān : the protector of refugees :

It is the very nature of Bhagavān to protect the being whom He considers as His own and who surrenders to him. This thing can easily be understood from the biography of devotees. There are innumerable examples like releasing Gajendra-Elephant from the grip of the crocodile, providing Draupadī with clothes, rescued Vraja-dwellers by holding Girirāja Mount from Indra's wrath, becoming the charioteer of Arjuna, performing Narasī Mehatā's Māmeruṁ(gift given by maternal uncle), becoming a courteer of Ugrasena. These are some extracts from the biography of devotees in which Bhagavān

emerges as the protector of his devotees. Hence, showing the significance of the resort in Bhagavān in his treatise : Viveka-dhairyaśraya Śrī Vallabhācārya says :

Sarvam āśrayato bhavet.

Meaning: Everything becomes possible by taking resort to Bhagavān.

Bhagavān too, says in the Gītā :

*°Sarva dharmān parityajya, mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
Ahaṁ tvā sarava-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śuca.*

Meaning: (Such as those that are obstructive in coming to my refuge) Arjuna leave aside all Dharmas and come to my sole refuge. I shall protect you from all sins. (That means, from all the obstacles you will face at the time of your coming to my refuge). Therefore, be free from worries.

Saying this, Bhagavān has very kindly manifested that all worldly and Vaidic Dharmas are of secondary-minor importance against refuge to Bhagavān.

To demand from Bhagavān is 'give & take' like attitude :

Reading and hearing such description of Bhagavān's power and mercifulness, very often, people who are in big or small difficulties, make an indiscreet demand before God to save them. But such people should remember that The Path of Puṣṭi-Devotion does not teach to behave like this.

Bhagavān is omniscient. He knows everything about all. Therefore, the difficulties of devotees are not unknown to Him. Whatever Bhagavān does for his devotee, He does it only for his good. Hence, one should have full trust in Bhagavān and should give up the least thought of asking for anything from Bhagavān. In this matter Prahlādaji's words are worth-considering. After killing Hiranyakaśipu Bhagavān commanded Prahlāda to ask for a boon. Every man should carve in his heart the answer Prahlāda gave to Bhagavān. Prahlāda says :

O Lord! you are tempting me to ask for a boon to test whether I have qualifications to become your devotee. Physical and worldly pleasures very often entangle one in the rounds of birth and death. You are always the well-wisher of your devotees. so, how can you think that your devotee may be ensnared by worldly pleasures? Hence, there seems no other purpose behind your command to ask for a boon except testing me.

O Bhagavān! The servant who asks for anything from you to fulfil his desires in no more a devotee. He is a Baniya-type servant who asks to be paid in return of his services. And the lord who fulfils somebody's desire with the sentiment "if I fulfil his desire, he will perform my service" cannot

become a true Lord, But I am your servant without having desire for any fruit and you are my Lord who does not have any expectation from his servant except trust and pure love. The relationship between you and me is not like that between the king and his employee. Both the king and the employee, have to fulfil their selfish ends—the king wishes to have fulfilment of his work and the employee wishes to have payment in return. Therefore, if you want to give me a boon, give me such that there may not arise in my mind any kind of desire. All the qualities like Dharma, intellect, truth, lustre etc. are destroyed in a man in whose mind any desire arises. One who gives up all kinds of desires does obtain devotion for Bhagavān.

Hearing these pretty words of Prahlāda, Bhagavān became very much pleased with him and said :

O Prahlāda! those who are my single minded devotees like you never ask from me the fulfilment of any kind of worldly and other worldly desires.

Hence the devotees of Bhagavān should hold steadfast resort in Bhagavān giving up all the desires that entrap them in the afflicts of worldly pleasure and pain. Therefore, in his treatise, Catuḥślokī, Śrī Vallabhācārya says :

° *Yadi śrī Gokulādhīso dhṛtaḥ sarvātmanā hr̥di
tataḥ kim-aparaṁ brūhi laukikair-vaidikair-
apī ataḥ sarvātmanā śaṣvad gokuleśvara - pādayoḥ
smaraṇaṁ bhajanāṁ cāpi na tyājyam iti me matiḥ*

Meaning: One who has held in heart ŚrīKṛṣṇa, the Lord of Gokula, tell me, what else is to be obtained by worldly and Vaidic means? Hence, one should perform the worship and remembrance of ŚrīKṛṣṇa by all means and for all the times. He should never give them up. This is my firm conviction.

Resort for ever & by all means:

A small child can not remain aloof of its mother. If the mother goes even a little bit far from it, the child is frightened and begins to cry. It runs to its mother. This is because the child is deeply attached to its mother. In fact, in very little age the child is not even conscious of anything else except its mother. Just as the small child is solely dependent upon its mother, similarly, the being as the (particle) son of Bhagavān should always take resort in Bhagavān.

As it is necessary to take resort in Bhagavān, it is equally necessary to take resort to Bhagavān by all means (sarvathā) i. e. by mind, speech and body. One who takes resort in Bhagavān for ever (Sarvadā) and by all means (Sarvathā), becomes a blessed-soul. Here it is necessary to understand the resort in Bhagavān that is performed through one's mind, speech and body.

Resort through mind:

Bhagavān is extremely gracious. He protects the being that comes to his refuge. Bhagavān is more powerful than all others. He is omnipotent. He is allpervading. He is the creator of all and the bestower of all kinds of good and bad fruits. When one thinks of such attributes of Bhagavān and feels and meditates in mind that nobody else except Bhagavān is my true support and protector, this can be called the resort of Bhagavān through the mind.

Resort through speech:

To recite constantly the Aṣṭākṣara-Mantra—The formula of eight letters that holds the purport: "ŚrīKṛṣṇa is my only resort and protector" is called the resort of Bhagavān through speech.

Resort through body:

When one makes the use of all the senses in the worship of Bhagavān, together with the resort through mind and speech, one is said to have resorted to Bhagavān through one's body.

In ŚrīBhāgavat there is a statement of Yama showing the significance of this triple resort in Bhagavān:

Bring to me those wicked people whose tongue does not utter the name of Bhagavān, whose mind does not remember Bhagavān, whose head does not bow to ŚrīKṛṣṇa and who do not worship ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

Because, I rule not over the devotees of Bhagavān but over the people who are attached to worldly life and who are deviated from Bhagavān.

Those who are graced by Bhagavān, obtain the excellent fruit by going to refuge in Bhagavān naturally without any inspiration, temptation or fear. If the people in whom such natural liking is not born, go to the refuge in Bhagavān with resolute mind, they too will surely be benefited.

Means of strengthening resort :

1. The knowledge of Bhagavān's greatness.
2. The knowledge of the being.
3. The abandonment of resort in other gods.
4. Nihsādhanatā = The devout sentiment of meanlessness.
5. Dīnatā = Humility.
6. Viveka = Indiscrimination.
7. Dhairya = Patience

—are some of the means of strengthening resort in Bhagavān.

1. The knowledge of Bhagavān's greatness :

As long as devotees don't have proper knowledge of the divinity of Bhagavān and His sports, his mind can not turn towards Bhagavān. Therefore, those who wish to promote firm resort, should obtain proper knowledge of Bhagavān's magnanimity and should constantly meditate upon it.

2. The knowledge of the being :

Every being is a particle of Bhagavān and thereby His servant. In comparison with Bhagavān a being is quite insignificant and incapable. Bhagavān has created from himself the whole animate and inanimate universe for his sports. Hence, it is the primary duty of every being to go to the refuge of Bhagavān, the Creator of the universe and the supreme self. This kind of knowledge of a being enables a devotee to decide his true duty.

3. Abandonment of resort in other gods :

The detailed discussion of this topic will be given in the next chapter.

4. Sentiment of meanlessness :

Scriptures show various means to approach Bhagavān. But inspite of adopting those means nothing can be attained without Bhagavān's grace and wish. Only that being before whom Bhagavān wishes to manifest Himself can behold Bhagavān or can obtain Bhagavān. Therefore, one should not entertain such a sentiment that whatsoever means like worship, remembrance, singing etc. he is adopting, he is doing all on his own. In the beginning it may appear to a devotee that everything is done by him but, it is Bhagavān who gets all that done through him.

5. Dīnatā - Humility :

Just as the employees behave politely and respectfully

with their masters, the devotee should behave with humility and respect with Bhagavān.

Through the knowledge of Bhagavān as well as of oneself the devotee obtains Dīnatā. But only this will not be enough to promote humility. It is also necessary for a devotee to abandon certain vices and wicked tendencies such as pride, jealousy, doubtfulness, obstinacy, impatience, intolerance, temptation etc. of mind that are hostile to the sentiment of humility. In practical life too, it is seen that due to the abovementioned distorted sentiments, people do not remain in position to evaluate objects situations, opposite individuals or even themselves in a proper way. How can a devotee properly obtain the knowledge of Bhagavān or that of oneself as long as such distortions have taken roots in his mind? Subsequently, how can he attain humility without it?

6. Discrimination - Viveka :

One who wishes to obtain firm resort in Bhagavān should know and treat the whole of this universe as the playground of Bhagavān; whatever and whenever anything happens here, all this happens because Bhagavān wishes so; Bhagavān is always the well-wisher of his devotee. With the proper understanding of Viveka one has to condition his mind with this thought.

7. Patience :

Various kinds of hardships keep coming in the life of

a human being. If he takes the burden of such hardships upon his mind, he will not be in position to live happily in his worldly as well as divine life. Hence, in his treatise 'Vivekadhairyāśraya' ŚrīVallabhācārya says that the devotee should think that when everything happens according to the wish of Bhagavān, the hardship also comes by His sole wish. Now, there remains no reason for a true devotee to oppose Bhagavān's wish. Therefore, ŚrīVallabhācārya says until devotee's refuge strengthens he should oppose those adversities which he can easily face. But hardships which can not be opposed easily should be taken as 'must'. Thinking that this is sure to happen, devotee should accept them as Bhagavān's wish. When one gets disturbed in no situation he is said to have patience in accordance with ŚrīVallabhācārya.

Bhagavān never does any harm to his devotees. Attracted by a burning lamp a small child may go to catch it. If the lamp is extinguished for the good of the child it will surely be unhappy. It will be dissatisfied with the extinguisher of the lamp. But all this takes place because of its ignorance. The child does not know what is good and what is bad for it. In the same way beings are ignorant. They become unhappy by various small and big hardships in their life. And so, they begin to complain to Bhagavān. But as the child grows up and understands that if the lamp had not been put off at that time he would have been burnt. Similarly, a devotee should understand that whatever hardship upsets him is due to his own ignorance. Just as the medicine tastes

quite bitter but it saves life and so everybody takes it in use. Similarly the hardships that befall the devotees are not really painful. Like medicine they have the capacity to remove forthcoming big hardships. By holding such sentiments devotee should keep patience.

If Bhagavān is resorted by adopting the abovementioned means, one can achieve firm resort by the grace of Bhagavān. Describing, greatness of resort in his treatise, Vivekadhairyaśraya Śrī Vallabhācārya says :

In the age of Kali when the paths of action, knowledge and devotion for attaining Bhagavān have become difficult for achieving its goal, Bhagavān's resort which is always beneficial for all mean-less beings has been narrated.

-
- a. In youth itself one must devote to Dharma,
as our life is quite uncertain,
like the ripe fruit that falls off the tree,
the man of ripe age faces fear of death.
 - b. Leaving aside all Dharmas
come only to my refuge;
from all sins whatever,
I will protect you, worry you not.
 - c. If the lord of Gokul is held in heart by all souls
Tell me what else be obtained by worldly and vaidic

means ?

Hence, with all your heart for ever of the lotus-feet of the Lord of Gokul.

The remembrance and worship too be not given up, this is my conviction.

Books for further reading :

Kṛṣṇāśraya and Vivekadhairyaśraya in Śodaṣāgrantha.

Anyāśraya-Tyāga

Visiting temples, performing worship and rites, reciting of names etc. as a part of devotion of gods and goddesses other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa or to cause other on one's behalf, to have rites, worship etc. of gods and goddesses other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa is called: 'Anyāśraya'.

To resort to other gods is the greatest offence in the Path of Puṣṭi-Bhakti.

Meaning of 'Anyāśraya':

The word 'Anyāśraya' is made up of two words: Anya + Āśraya.

'Anyā' means: whatsoever other than Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa, or it means all gods and goddesses other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

'Āśraya' means: to take resort in any gods and goddesses willingly for fulfilling some desire/without such desire or it means: to believe some god as one's Iṣṭa—all-in-all or to believe him as one's most favourite god.

'Ārādhyā', 'Iṣṭa', 'Upāśya', 'Pūjanīya', 'Bhajanīya', 'Sevya', 'Arcya', etc. are words that are mostly used in equal

meaning -worshipable.

Iṣṭa-Deva—The favourite god:

The goddess or the god whom the devotee chooses most for performing service is called: 'Iṣṭadeva' of that devotee. For example, overwhelmed by Śiva's magnanimity some people are attracted towards Śiva and therefore they become follower of Śaiva Sampradāya. Various forms of Śakti or Durgā are Iṣṭadevī for the followers of Śākta-Sect. ŚrīKṛṣṇa or His incarnations are Iṣṭadeva for the followers of Vaiṣṇava-Sect. It is considered quite improper to resort to other gods leaving aside one's favourite god in the tradition of the devotional sects, universally. Hence, if the follower of any devotional-sect begins to worship the god of any other sect on his own accord, it is called 'Anyāśraya'—resort in other god or the violation of solitary devotion. This is considered as blemish in the path of devotion.

Puṣṭimārga is the path of devotion. Path of the devotion of supreme Brahma ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Hence, any kind of devotional practice, such as worship, visiting temples etc. of any gods and goddesses other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa is considered as blameworthy. Here it is necessary to know the situations in which resort in other gods takes place.

Resons behind Anyāśraya:

If whatever (Darśana or worship) is performed specially for worshipping Iṣṭadeva in accordance with scriptural rules,

tradition or popular custom is performed for gods and goddesses other than one's *Iṣṭadeva*, one is said to have committed 'Anyāśraya'—resort in other gods. Let us think about the reason that lies behind it.

When a person meets his neighbour, goes to his home and always remains present in all auspicious and inauspicious occasions. We can guess that he has good relations with his neighbour or he wishes to maintain good relation with him. Similarly, if a believer in one god, goes to have *Darśna* and worship of some other god, we can easily guess that he has faith, devotion or sentiment of resort even for another god; Or in near future, it can happen so. Let us consider this properly.

Nobody knows from his very birth how to behave with the members of family or with any person in the society. Seeing how people behave with one another, slowly child begins to learn how to deal with people in society. Not only this, we find different sections in society with different behavior patterns and customs. Child learns that too. However, it is not possible to understand and learn customs and behavior patterns concerning deities on the basis of such social dealings. Etiquettes concerning deities are altogether different from that of social etiquettes. It is the subject of scriptures. Scriptures narrate various kinds of worship and devotion such as :

By giving bath; offering clothes, ornaments,

Tulasī-leaves, flowers, food, *Āratī* etc; *Darśana*, bowing, *Parikramaṇam*, meditation, prayer, praise etc.; visiting in pilgrimage places *Iṣṭadevatā*; taking *Prasāda*; hearing *Purāṇa* of *Iṣṭadevatā*; listening to religions songs; observing rites and fasts; performing sacrifice; to recite mantra etc.; applying sacred marks on one's body; to wear thread, talisman, amulet ring etc.

All these scriptural and popular doings are means of expressing one's faith, resort or devotion towards favourite gods. Hence, if the follower of the path of *Puṣṭi* performs worship of any other gods or goddesses with one or many of the abovementioned kinds, it can clearly be understood that he commits resort to gods other than *ŚrīKṛṣṇa*. It is indispensable for the follower of the *Puṣṭi-Bhakti* cult to abandon all the abovementioned types of doings pertaining to other goddesses and gods. Without thorough abandonment of *Anyāśraya* one can not be a follower of *Puṣṭi-Bhakti*-sect. In other words it can be said that one who commits resort in others after entering into *Puṣṭi*-sect is not a disciple of *Puṣṭi*-sect in the real sense of the term.

No disrespect of other gods :

The scriptural instruction to abandon resort in others should not be taken to mean an insult or disrespect to other gods and goddesses. In practical life too, we can see that

a servant believes only that person as his master whom he serves and not others; a woman believes that person as her husband whom she marries; and a child considers only that couple as its parents who have given him birth. Hence, believing some person as a master, a husband or parents does never mean disrespecting all other persons. Similarly, the scriptural doctrine of believing any one god as one's favourite god should not be taken to mean disrespect towards other gods and goddesses. Pancadevopāsānā = worship of five gods, Bahudevopāsānā = worship of many gods, Sarvadevopāsānā = worship of all gods or Ananyopāsānā = worship of one and single god. Thus, scriptures have propounded several courses of worship. Out of these courses, devotees are free to select any course of worship. After selecting Ananyaopāsānā as a course of devotional life, devotees have to concentrate their mind on one and single god to whom they have selected as favourite god.

Respectable and worshipable:

In ancient time because of being employees of a king, all officers like the chief minister, the minister, the commander of an army etc., were considered equally worthy of respect for the subject. But the people did not hold as much respect for any other persons as they had towards their king. No officers felt offended by people's having greater respect for the king in comparison with themselves. Just as the king was held above all by the people, he was also held supreme by officers. In the same way all gods and goddesses are

respectable for the disciple of the path of Puṣṭi however, the favourite most God Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa is supremely respectable and worthy of worship. As a devotee is pleased to see another devotee, gods and goddesses become pleased by seeing a Vaiṣṇava who takes resort only in ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

When the gods and goddesses like Śiva, Gaṇapati, Durgā etc. see a Vaiṣṇava, they at once, have the remembrance of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, the God of gods, and hence, they become pleased. Just as Vaiṣṇavas convey the remembrance of Bhagavān by reciting "Jay ŚrīKṛṣṇa" when they meet one another, similarly, when Vaiṣṇava comes across the temples of *scriptural* gods and goddesses, knowing them as divine particles of Bhagavāna, he should, respectfully, convey to them the remembrance of Bhagavān by reciting "Jay! ŚrīKṛṣṇa". It is not a least necessary for a Vaiṣṇava disciple to worship other gods and goddesses in the way he worships his favourite god ŚrīKṛṣṇa as narrated before.

Who should approach ŚrīKṛṣṇa?

Being a part of the supreme God ŚrīKṛṣṇa all other gods and goddesses are potential only in parts. So the fruits obtainable from them are of short and are perishable. ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the God of all gods, He is omnipotent. The fruit that is obtained from him is imperishable. Those who wish to obtain insignificant fruits like wealth etc. should go to gods and goddesses who are bestowers of worthless fruits and who are holding a very little potentiality. Those who desire

to obtain excellent, imperishable fruits of Bhagavān's worship and devotion should go to the refuge of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Resort to other gods is not praiseworthy :

Narrating in the Gītā that resort to other gods is not praiseworthy Bhagavān says :

The people whose intellect is mortified by desires of enjoying various kinds of worldly objects and pleasures, begin to worship other gods and goddesses by upholding rules like rites, reciting of mantra and worship.

Such corrupt-minded people obtain fruits from those gods by worshipping them with faith. But it is only I that have empowered these gods to grant fruits.

But the fruit that is granted to these people of low intellect as worshippers of these gods soon becomes perishable.

Hence, Bhagavān further says :

Devān devayajo yānti, mad-bhaktā yānti māmapi

Meaning: People of low intellect who worship other gods attain gods that are mortal. Those who worship me with one pointedness obtain me, the eternal one.

Reasons for committing resort in other gods :

1. Dissatisfaction
2. Fear
3. Distrust
4. Ignorance of Bhagavān
5. Bad company
6. Ignorance of doctrines.

Particularly, above six reasons lead the follower of Ananya - Bhakti to seek resort in other gods.

1. Dissatisfaction :

The man who is not satisfied with his life cannot believe himself to be happy, how-so-much wealth and prestige he may obtain. Such dissatisfied people weep over their distresses before Bhagavān and pray to fulfil their desires. And when their desires are not fulfilled, instantly, they become impatient and run into the shelter of different gods and goddesses or adopt various means like Mantra-Jap, Tīrtha-Yātrā, Dān, Sacrifice etc. Thus, they are led to take resort in other gods.

Such people who take resort in other gods because of dissatisfaction from their existing belongings should know that no worldly being or object is able to satisfy human greed fully. Moreover, man has to avail the accumulated fruit of good and bad actions committed by him in his earlier births. Therefore, if the situation does not change easily inspite

of one's efforts, one should by abandoning false obstinacy, accept that situation as the will of Bhagavān. Hence, one should hold patience keeping trust that whatever situation has turned up, it has been brought by none but Bhagavān. But in no situation one should take resort in other gods. Because, if Bhagavān wishes that way, no other gods or goddesses are capable of doing anything against it. Hence, a Vaiṣṇava disciple should never give up satisfaction and patience.

2. Fear :

Those who do not happen to be the disciple of Vaiṣṇava sect by family-tradition, and are believers in other gods or goddesses, continue to worship other gods and goddesses even after becoming Vaiṣṇavas. They have a sort of fear in their mind that if they stop worshipping those gods and goddesses after becoming the disciple of Vaiṣṇava sect it will be a sin on their part. They also feel that other gods will take it as disrespect to them and so becoming wrathful they will bring misfortune to them. By such fear some people hold offering, flowers, milk, water, oil etc. on special days and festivals, at family occasions and in illness before their family-goddess or gods and other gods and goddesses like Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Gaṇeśa, Hanumaṇ, Śiva etc.

The people who take resort in other gods because of fear should understand that just as ministers cannot do any harm to the person who has taken refuge in the feet of

king, what harm can other gods or goddesses do to a person who has taken refuge in the feet of Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa, the God of gods? Also, being a divine particles of Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa gods themselves are the obedient devotee of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. A devotee is pleased when another devotee comes to the refuge of his own Lord and serves the lord. Similarly, gods too, are extremely pleased when somebody worships ŚrīKṛṣṇa and gives up their worship & devotion. Hence, those who have gone to the refuge of Bhagavān should give up resort in other gods without keeping any fear and should keep on the refuge only in ŚrīKṛṣṇa. And if they have, in their houses, idols and pictures of any other gods or goddesses because of family-tradition they should respectfully entrust them to their believers or to the temples of respective gods and goddesses.

3. Distrust :

A man begins to take resort in another god if he loses trust or has no trust in the god whom he has resorted to. When one goes towards Bhagavān through the path of devotion by proclaiming himself as a single-minded devotee, Bhagavān can not bear to see even a bit of his devotees distrust upon him. We can see this even in our ordinary life. Howsoever deep relationship may exist between two persons, but if a thing of even a bit of distrust comes in between them, the relationship may break away within no time. Such thing may happen also in the relationship with Bhagavān. The relationship of devotees with Bhagavān is apieced

as soon as they begin to distrust Bhagavān. As Meghanāda distrusted Brahmāstra, he discharged to bind Hanumānaji, forthwith Brahmāstra abandoned the company of Meghanāda.

Having got the news that Rāvaṇa has abducted Sītājī, Rāmachandrajī sent Hanumānaji in search of Sītājī. As soon as demons knew that Hanumānaji had come to Lankā, they rushed to catch him. But in no way they could catch him. At last, Meghanād, the son of Rāvaṇa, discharged Brahmāstra to bind Hanumānaji with the power of Mantra. In order to show respect to Brahmāstra Hanumānaji got bound on his own accord. But Meghanāda who had already experienced Hanumānaji's might and entertained distrust that with one blow Hanumānaji would break away the girt of Brahmāstra, look like the cotton thread he ordered to bind Hanumānaji with iron-chains. Seeing Meghanād's distrust upon Brahmāstra, Hanumānaji broke iron-chain alongwith Brahmāstra. Released from it Hanumānaji burnt the whole city of Lankā to ashes.

Thus, it can be understood that how dreadful consequences of distrust can be. Hence, in his treatise, 'Viveka-dhiryāśraya' Śrī Vallabhācārya says :

Aviśvāso na kartavyaḥ

Sarvathā bādhakas-tu saḥ.

Meaning: Distrust is harmful in all the ways. So, one should never entertain distrust upon Bhagavān.

4. The ignorance of Bhagavān :

Fear or distrust is produced because one does not have proper knowledge of Bhagavān or has forgotten the greatness of Bhagavān. So, the person is led to take resort in other gods. Hence, to protect oneself from taking resort in other gods caused by the ignorance of the greatness of Bhagavān, one should obtain thorough knowledge of Bhagavān's greatness, attributes and sports narrated in Śrī Bhagavata, Gita, Stories of Vaiṣṇavas etc. from senior disciples and Guru.

5. Bad company :

A husband and wife were disciples of Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī. In their neighbourhood there lived a woman who was a worshiper of the Goddess. She used to call the Vaiṣṇava woman at her home but she would not go. One day morning that woman brought the Vaiṣṇava woman at her home insistently. The neighbour was a wealthy woman. Vaiṣṇava woman's mind was tempted at her wealth. She stuffed Vaiṣṇava woman's mind with the idea that she was poor because she worshiped Śrī Kṛṣṇa and not her family-goddess. She also gave her an idol of goddess for performing worship.

At noon the Vaiṣṇava came home. His wife sent him to buy articles for worship. Vaiṣṇava woman's mind was spoiled by the company of neighbourly woman of other path and Vaiṣṇava man's mind was spoiled by the company of his wife. If a Vaiṣṇava takes resort in other gods, it can never be considered good. Bhagavān played such a sport that it brought Vaiṣṇava to his senses. Vaiṣṇava who had gone to buy articles for the worship of the goddess bought all he needed. But while returning he made a mistake and took away shopkeeper's money-bag instad of his own. When the shopkeeper came to know it, he made a complaint to the king and Vaiṣṇava was caught. As a punishment he was compelled to sit on a donkey and move about throughout the city. The Vaiṣṇava realized his fault of taking resort in other gods.

In the company of an ill man even a healthy man is likely to fall sick. For this reason doctors often give advice to keep aloof of sick person. In the same way, the Vaiṣṇava should avoid a person whose company may lessen his liking in Bhagavān's worship and remembrance, faith in the Mārga and leads to deviate from Bhagavān. Therefore, the disciples should think well before seeking the company of those Vaiṣṇavas too, who have not obtained sufficient knowledge of the doctrines

of Puṣṭi-Mārga. The present story gives us the knowledge of this doctrine.

6. Ignorance of the doctrines :

Every well-planned road is furnished with indications like milestones, signboards, warnings against perils, check-posts etc. for the convenience of the travelers. But if a man intrudes on the road who is idle of walking; or who has no desire of walking at all; or who does not like to walk according to the directions, how can such a man be led to reach any destination, howsoever well-planned may the road be! In the same way a man may be knowing how to walk and is not idle at walking, but if he does not know where he has to go, i.e. the destination to which the road leads; or where the path ends; and could not read and understand indications, signs, directions and cautions; how can such a man attain the target? Hence, we should understand one thing that the knowledge of the path is necessary for one who wants to tread upon it. Similarly, one who enters into any religious sect must have the knowledge of its fundamental doctrines.

Because of inadequate knowledge of the doctrine of the Devotional Path of Puṣṭi disciples go into the resort of gods and goddesses other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Hence, such ignorant people should, at first, acquire the knowledge of the doctrines of the path through efficient Guru and should remove their ignorance.

Thus, we have seen what resort in other gods is and what is meant by the abandonment of resort in other gods. Abandonment of resort in other gods is the first condition for entering into Puṣṭi-Mārga. Hence, praising one-pointed devotion void of resort in other gods in the Gītā Bhagavān says :

*“Māñca yo'vyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate
sa guṇān samatītyaitān; brahmabhuyāya kalpate.*

Meaning: One who performs my service with unadulterated devotion, i.e. with the Yoga of devotion void of resort in other gods, becomes free from the bondages of worldly attributes and obtains the supreme fruit.

-
- a. One who performs my service
with Yoga of unadulterated devotion.
Becoming free from worldly attributes.
He does obtain fruit supreme.

Books for further reading :

Vivekadhīryāśraya in Śoḍaśagrantha
84-252 Vaiṣṇavas stories
Śrī Bhāgavata
Bhagavad Gītā.

Śaraṇa-Mārga

Having firm conviction that in this world and hereafter except Śrī Kṛṣṇa no one is my true relative and support, abandoning resort in other Gods and faith in other means; and keeping equally stable sentiment in favourable as well as unfavourable circumstances, one should keep on hearing, remembering and singing Bhagavān's glory, attributes and sports. This is called Śaraṇa-Mārga—the path of surrender.

Origin of the path of surrender :

When the war between Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas was finally declared, Arjuna, on the side of Pāṇḍavas and Duryodhana, on the side of Kauravas went to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa to ask for his help. Arjuna, the devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked for Bhagavān himself on his side; while Duryodhana was pleased to have Śrī Kṛṣṇa's army on his side. And at that time of war Arjuna made Bhagavān his charioteer and guide.

To begin war both the sides started blowing bugles. Meantime Bhagavān brought Arjun's chariot between both the armies on the battle-field, casting his glance at the opposite side Arjuna saw his uncles, brothers, cousins, nephews, maternal uncles, relatives and Guru ready to fight. Arjuna was brave

and adept in archery. He had thorough knowledge of all scriptures. However, when he realised that he would have to wage war with his relatives, there was great agitation and upheaval in his mind. His body began to tremble from toe to tuft. He felt that if there was any person to guide him on the right path in such dire circumstances it was only Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Arjuna went to his refuge and requested.

O ŚrīKṛṣṇa! my mind is not firm in these difficult circumstances. I am not in the position to make the use of discrimination to know what is right and what is wrong. I cannot see anybody else except you who can resolve problems that confront me. Hence, I have approached you. Kindly tell me what is good for me. I have come to your refuge. Kindly instruct me.

Hearing these words of Arjuna, Bhagavān realised that with his meanlessness, one pointedness, staunch faith, disinterestedness in other means and perfect humility, Arjuna was worth surrendering. So, Bhagavān accepted his surrender. He resolved all his doubts and finally gave him instruction of the path of surrender beneficial to every living being:

*^aSarva dharmān parityajya mām ekam Śraṇam vraja
aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyami mā śuca*

Meaning: Leaving aside all Dharmas that stand as obstacles in coming to my refuge, come only to my refuge. I shall save you from all sins i.e. from all the obstacles that you will face at the time of your coming to my refuge. Be quite free from worries.

This very instruction of Bhagavān is the foundation of the Path of Surrender shown by Śrī Vallabhācārya.

When a small child being frightened because of being all alone runs to its mother, she takes her palpitating baby in her lap with her afflicted heart. Similarly, if one surrenders Bhagavān with staunch faith, meanlessness, humility and one-pointedness; Bhagavān certainly accepts him as his devotee.

Six facets of the surrender :

Śaraṇa means to entrust oneself to Bhagavān by all means. And, Śaraṇa-Mārga (The Path of Surrender) can be defined as a mean or a path to surrender oneself to Bhagavān wholeheartedly and in all ways. We find in Śrī Vallabhācārya's treatise 'Pañcasiokī' one and a half verse that narrates six facets of surrender in order to entrust ourselves to Bhagavān perfectly.

*Ānukūlasya saṅkalpaḥ pratikūla-visarjanam,
karīṣyatīti viṣvāsaḥ bhartṛtve varaṇam yathā;
Ātmanaivedya-kārpanye śadvidhā śaraṇāgatih.*

1. Resolve to become favourable,
2. Abandonment of what is adverse,
3. Trust that Bhagavān will himself do,
4. Bhagavān will protect and nourish
5. Self-dedication and
6. Humility.

These are the six facets of surrender.

1. Anukūlasya saṅkalpa - Resolve to be Favourable:

Resolute decision to be favourable in all matters pertaining to Bhagavān and his worship etc.

Whatever happens with a devotee, it is Bhagavān who does everything by his own sweet-will. Hence, one should take pleasure and pain, praise and blame and every situation as the sport of Bhagavān. He should perform Bhagavān's worship, remembrance and singing etc. neutrally and gladly.

2. Pratikūla-visarjanam - Abandonment of the Adverse:

Abandonment of all matters that are unfavourable to Bhagavān and the matters pertaining to Bhagavān.

Abandonment of resort in other Gods, company of non-Vaiṣṇavas, evil-thoughts, evil and useless talk, pursuance of Adharma, earning livelihood through business and trade that is prohibited and blamed in scriptures, temptation, anger, miserliness, ignorance, egotism, envy, uneatables etc. All these matters are opposed to devotion in one way or the other.

The follower of devotional path should abandon all such matters as soon as possible.

3. Karīṣyatīti viśvāsaḥ: Trust that Bhagavān himself will do:

To have firm trust that Bhagavān himself will do all works of a devotee who has surrendered to him.

Promising to Arjuna in the Gītā, Bhagavān says:

I nourish the sentiments of those people who meditate upon me with one-pointedness and perform my worship through their body, mind and wealth. I make up for the shortcoming that have crept into their sentiments.

Hence the being who has surrendered to Bhagavān must have firm faith that Bhagavān does all the works of his devotee who has come to his refuge.

4. Bhartṛtve Varaṇam: Bhagavān is the protector and nourisher.

Bhagavān should be taken as the protector and nourisher. As a child becomes free from all kinds of fears when he is with his father and does not have any worries of past and future, similarly Bhagavān, the father of the universe, and the supreme self is like the protecting and nourishing father for the being who has surrendered to him. Hence, the being should be free from worry and fear having Bhagavān as his protector and caretaker.

5. Ātma-naivedya—Self-dedication:

To dedicate oneself and one's all belongings into the service of Bhagavān is called self-dedication. That means a devotee should abandon the pride of I-NESS and my-ness that lies in himself and in everything that belongs to him. He should cultivate sentiments that he himself and whatever belongs to him, all is for the service of Bhagavān. The true essence of dedication lies only in this. When a devotee accepts Bhagavān as his protector, he does not need to keep pride of my-ness in anything. Now the only duty remains on his part is to dedicate all his belongings into the service of Bhagavān.

6. Kārpaṇya-Humility:(See page no. 89-90)

Twofold path of surrender :

According to ŚrīVallabhācārya the path of surrender is not only an independent path but it is also a complementary and supplementary to the devotional path of Puṣṭi.

The devotee who performs Bhagavān's worship as well as remembrance as a single course of his life

OR

The devotee who does not perform worship of Bhagavān but who does hear, sing and

remember Bhagavān's attributes and sports and also seeks the company of devotees as a single course of his life;

—the path of surrender will enable both types of devotees to strengthen Bhagavān's devotion.

Whereas, one who could neither perform Bhagavān's worship, nor could hear, sing, remember as a single course of his life; if such meaningless person takes refuge in Bhagavān with one-pointed devotional sentiment, ŚrīVallabhācārya consoles such devotee and says:

*Haris tu sarvato rakṣāṁ
kariṣyati na saṁśayaḥ*

Meaning: Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the remover of agonies of his devotee will protect his devotee by all means. Therefore does not entertain any sort of doubt.

From that it can be understood that the path of surrender is an independent path for a meaningless being.

Why should one enter into the path of surrender ?

The first and the last aim of any follower of the path of Puṣṭi is to spend the whole of his life in Bhagavān's worship and remembrance. To make preparations to fulfil this aim, one should enter into the path of surrender. When some great occasion is to come in our life, we make preparations

for it in advance. The purpose behind these preparations is to see that there may not be any obstacles or any kind of deficiencies in the celebration of such occasion. Similarly, the greatest and the happiest occasion in the life of any follower of Puṣṭi-Mārga is to have Śrī kṛṣṇa enshrined in his home so as to worship him through all his body, mind and wealth. Śrī Vallabhācārya has arranged Śaraṇamārga into the Puṣṭi-Mārga to make preparation for celebration before the arrival of such occasion. Hence, Śaraṇamārga is considered as the means of the path of devotion. Having initiation of Aṣṭākṣaranāma-Mantra, the sacred formula of eight letters, from an efficient guru, one can enter into the path of surrender.

Duties of the path of surrender :

A student who gets admission in a school to receive education has not only to sit in the class to learn but also has to follow certain duties such as to maintain discipline, to keep cleanliness, to behave politely, to respect teachers, to wear uniform, to maintain regularity and the prestige of the school etc. In one way or the other all these matters become useful and beneficial to students in acquiring learning. Similarly, a being who has entered into the path of Surrender with an aim to perform worship of Bhagavān has to observe certain duties. We shall, now, refer to that.

1. The knowledge about Ācārya :

Adventurers hire a guide when they go to some unknown place. It is necessary for travelers to have full identity of

the guide and trust upon him. Otherwise they can't fulfil their aim. It may happen at the time of expedition the path become more and more arduous; or they may not be able to reach up to their aim because of their limitation; or the path may not be such as they may have imagined it to be. In any situations like these, if adventurers do not know their guide very well, it is quite likely that they may distrust him. Even though the path to which their guide leads them may be the right way, they leave it aside and return or change it. How can any adventurer, then, fulfil his aim ?

Śrī Vallabhācārya not only discovered the path of Puṣṭi-devotion which was concealed in the scriptures but he also made it easy for Puṣṭi-beings to tread upon it. Therefore, Śrī Vallabhācārya is a guide for the follower of the devotional path of Puṣṭi. The follower of the devotional path of Puṣṭi means : One who puts into practice the instructions Śrī Vallabhācārya has given in his works, keeping faith and trust in them; and one who keeps oneself aloof from all those matters which have been blamed and forbidden in them. To become a follower of the path of Śrī Vallabhācārya in this sense can become possible only then when one has the knowledge about the divinity of Śrī Vallabhācārya and unbroken trust upon him. If these are lacking in the candidate it is quite probable that he may not be able to tread upon the path. It is also possible that the doctrines of the Path may appear difficult / impractical; or there may be delay in obtaining the fruit of Bhagavān's worship and devotion. It is on account

of all these reasons that one may give up so excellent path of Puṣṭi.

However difficult the path may be, the adventurer who is committed to achieve his goal and has firm confidence on his guide, would definitely achieve his goal. Similarly, if the follower has the knowledge of his Ācārya and trust upon him, the path of Puṣṭi will not appear difficult and impractical to him, though it may appear so to other people. He will not feel any difficulty if he makes some small or big changes in his way of life or in his business and trade in order to follow the path. His mind will not feel any disturbance if some people criticise him while following the path. The trust upon his Ācārya will enable him to bear worldly as well as other-worldly hardships easily, if there are any. And if, by the will of Bhagavān, is delay in obtaining the fruit he will not lose patience and will not have any distrust upon the path. Let us not forget that all this will happen only through our knowledge about Śrī Vallabhācārya and trust upon him.

By obtaining the knowledge of Śrī Vallabhācārya, his disciple Śrī Sūradāsa gave up his own title of a Guru. Though wealthy, Śrī Dāmodardāsa of Sambhal did not feel ashamed of going through the bazar to fetch water for Śrī Thākorjī. Śrī Nārāyaṇāś did not care for worldly harm and showed readiness to bear five hundred blows for the sake of his fellow Vaiṣṇava. Śrī Padmanābhādāsa gave up preaching

Śrī Bhāgavata for his livelihood at the very instance of Śrī Vallabhācārya. Śrī Kumbhanadāsa did not even glance at the abundant wealth offered by the king Mānasirṭha and Śrī Santadāsa did not even look at the wealth of Śrī Thākuraṅgī. These are some results of the knowledge of Śrī Vallabhācārya and sound trust upon him.

Hence, it is the primary duty of one who has entered into the path of Surrender to obtain through his Dikṣāguru the knowledge of Śrī Vallabhācārya. Śrī Vallabhācārya's divine personality and character are narrated in hymnal works like Śrī Sarvottam, Śrī Vallabhāṣṭakam, Śrī Saptāśloki etc, composed by Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī in stories of Vaiṣṇavas and in devotional songs. Every disciple must study all these works with faith and attention.

2. Knowledge of the doctrines :

To acquire knowledge of the doctrines of one's sect is the second chief duty of a disciple who has entered into the path of surrender. He may have knowledge of Śrī Vallabhācārya and may have trust upon him but he can not follow the course of the sect if he does not know its doctrines. If one wishes to drive a car, he must have, at first, proper knowledge of driving. He must have, then, obtained the permit / driving license from the concerned authority to drive car. And, finally, he must have proper knowledge of the route and traffic rules. Similarly, to follow religious course, it is necessary to observe every doctrine of Śrī Vallabhācārya,

the propounder of Puṣṭi-Mārga.

How to acquire knowledge of doctrines?

In order to acquire the knowledge of the sect disciples have to study every aspect e.g. philosophical, doctrinal, practical, Bhāva as well as Phala aspects of the sect regularly from his Guru. Śoḍaśagrantha and Tattvārth - dīpanibandha composed by Śrī Vallabhācārya contain the essence of the devotional path of Puṣṭi. Hence, it is indispensable for one who wishes to follow Puṣṭi-Mārga at least to study these works from his guru. Those who set apart doctrines only on the basis of 84-252 Vaiṣṇavas stories and other literature of stories and Vacanāmṛta-discourses or tradition should make decisions regarding any kinds of doctrines only after making thorough study of the abovementioned works. If doctrinal decisions are derived only on the basis of literature of Vaiṣṇava Vārtās and Vacanāmṛtas, without studying basic works, it is quite likely that dreadful errors may creep in such decisions.

Evils of doctrinal ignorance:

Today, because of ignorance of the doctrines of the sect innumerable followers have been causing harm to themselves by behaving contrary to the sect. Taking the advantage of the ignorance of the followers of Puṣṭi-Mārga, seekers of selfish motives, ill-intentioned people, evil-doers and some villainous people inside and outside of this Mārga are misleading them under the pretext of Śrī Vallabhācārya. The present day politicians that hold the false policy of

divide and rule, take the advantage of ignorance of ordinary people by raising issues of castes, religion, minority people, province etc, in order to serve their own selfish motives. Similarly, in this Mārga too, there are some selfish and opportunists who intentionally mislead the followers of this Mārga for the sake of their own selfishness and try to propagate and establish hypocritical false traditions or customs so as to keep them ignorant of basic doctrines of the Mārga and serve their own evil designs. Such things happen at times in every sect. There is only one solution for this: the study of the works of Śrī Vallabhācārya. In clear words Śrī Vallabhācārya says:

Śastram avagatya mano-vag-dehaiḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sevyah.

Meaning: (Śoḍaśagrantha, Nibandha, Śrī Bhāgavata etc., in which doctrines of devotional path of Puṣṭi have been explained) Studying and understanding scriptures in a good way one should perform Śrī Kṛṣṇa's worship through mind, speech and body.

3. Hearing - Singing - Remembering :

The knowledge of the doctrines of the Mārga gives an idea as to how the Mārga is and how it is not; how to behave in it and how not to behave; where it leads and where it does not lead and so on. The dry knowledge of the doctrines does not enhance the devotional sentiment towards Bhagavān. The enhancement of devotional sentiment is possible only by hearing, singing and remembering Bhagavān's sports,

merits, names etc. . Just as people who are fond of cricket, music or painting like to discuss their dear subjects and read books of these subjects in the company of the people of similar nature so as to have more liking and inspiration for their dear subjects. Similarly, the disciple of Puṣṭi sect should hear, sing and remember Bhagavān in the accompaniment of other disciples and Guru of Puṣṭi sect. By doing so, the ebb that may have come in devotional sentiment because of bad company, bad thought or bad food etc. will be removed and replaced with tide. The company of senior devotees will enhance his liking in Bhagavān's worship and will inspire him the sense of doing his duties.

4. Signs Of Vaiṣṇava :

It is necessary for the follower of the sect to apply external sacred signs of the sect on his body as prescribed by ŚrīVallabhācārya. Internal symbols of Vaiṣṇavism like affection for ŚrīKṛṣṇa, knowledge of the greatness of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, resort in ŚrīKṛṣṇa, humility, meanlessness etc. are helpful in issuing a check upon the mind and intellect of the disciple; while external signs like Tilaka and Kanthi ('U' shape vermilion mark and Tulasī - garland) issue a control over external dealings that they have through body and tongue. These signs not only constantly remind the disciple of his duties but also keep him constantly alert so that he may not do any untoward thing to hurt the dignity of his sect. While performing his duties, the follower of the path of surrender should never forget that he has been doing all this so as to obtain eligibility

to perform ŚrīKṛṣṇa's worship.

Narrating the fruit obtained by a being who goes to the refuge of Bhagavān, it has been said in ŚrīBhāgavata :

Just as a person who takes nourishing and delicious food avails at a time three advantages of pleasantness, nourishment and satiety, similarly, a person who goes to the refuge of Bhagavān also avails at a time three fruits: devotion, the inner experience of Bhagavān and detachment to all matters except Bhagavān.

a. Leaving aside all dharmas
come to my sole refuge.
From all sins I shall
protect you, Worry you not.

Books for further reading :

Description of Nyāsādeśa composed by ŚrīPrabhucaraṇa.

Puṣṭi - Bhakti

Puṣṭi - devotion :

Preceded by the knowledge of His magnanimity the worship that is performed with firm and utmost affection for Bhagavān without having any desire for worldly / otherworldly fruits or even salvation is called Puṣṭi - Bhakti.

Various kinds of devotion :

The work to be done may be one and the same, but as the person who does it, the nature of the person, purpose behind the work, situation, time etc., go on changing; there does come a change in the form of the work. For example, when a doctor makes an incision on the body of a patient in order to make him healthy, it is called medical treatment; but when an enemy blows a cut on the body, it is called an assault. If a worthy person is given alms respectfully at proper place and time without keeping desire for any fruit in return it is considered as a religious - deed. But when alms is given to an improper and unworthy person who is behaving against religion, or given to an atheist / imposter / greedy man, or to a Devalaka it should be called Adharma. The instruction of observing scriptural rules of purity and impurity, given to a potential person is called preaching of Sadācāra. But when the instruction is given to an incapable

person in the same manner, it turns out to be a preaching of Atyācāra. If any follower of Puṣṭi - sect performs worship, Darśana, hearing stories etc. of other gods / goddesses under some - body's pressure, helplessly or unwillingly, in that case he is not committing any sin. But when there is nothing like that even then if any follower of Puṣṭi - sect resorts to other gods knowingly and willingly, then it is, certainly, a sin. When a follower of Puṣṭi - sect does not perform worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, the instruction of making no use of un-offered objects is not applicable to him. Vallabhācārya's command to give up un-offered objects is for one who is graced with the Dikṣā of Brahmasambandha and who performs ŚrīKṛṣṇa's worship at home.

Now it can be understood how one and the same work undergoing a change takes different forms. Same is the thing with devotion. Showing why there are different kinds of devotions among scriptures, different traditions and ordinary people, it has been said in ŚrīBhāgavata that different kinds of devotions take place because of the following difference in beings.

1. Nature
2. Guṇa and
3. Paths

1. Difference of nature :

From the very beginning of the creation Bhagavān has

made beings having different nature or temperament like:

- a. Puṣṭi
- b. Maryādā and
- c. Pravāha

Hence, the form of devotion that is performed by the people of different dispositions is beset with diversity. For example:

- a. Devotion that is performed by the people with Puṣṭi - nature is full of devout sentiment and is adorned by affectionate worship.
- b. The devotion performed by the people of Maryādā - nature is chiefly rich in scriptural rules and regulations and is performed as a means to obtain salvation.
- c. While the devotion performed by the people of Pravāhī - nature is mostly mechanical or targeted with selfish motives to obtain insignificant fruits such as worldly and otherworldly pleasure etc.

Thus, devotion undergo changes because of differences in nature of its performer.

2. Differences in Guṇa :

It is necessary to understand Guṇa and its effects before we discuss the changes of devotion that take place because of differences in Guṇa.

The soul is sentient, while the body is insentient or material. Body can do any work only because the sentient soul resides in it. An example of a machine can be cited to understand it. A machine works when the current of electricity passes through it. Here, machine = body and electricity = soul. A machine is made up of various parts of different metals like iron, brass etc. If the machine is made up of high-grade metals, it will work well and last longer, otherwise it will not give good result.

From this illustration it can be understood that body too, like other lifeless objects, is made up of earthly / natural Guṇa of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. But the ratio of these Guṇa does not remain equal in every object or living body. If there is predominance of the property of Sattva in any person, the attributes of Rajas and Tamas remain suppressed in him. Likewise, when the property of Rajas takes hold in a person, property of Sattva and Tamas are suppressed and when the attribute of Tamas grows potential, it suppresses the attributes of Sattva and Rajas. Thus, in one and the same person the rise and fall goes on. But on the whole a person can be considered a possessor of that Guṇa which remains the highest in him. In other words, a person in whom the attribute of Sattva is in excess is called 'Sāttvika' and persons in whom the attribute of Rajas and Tamas are in excess are called 'Rājas' and 'Tāmas' respectively.

Variation in Guṇa takes place because of a number of

reasons like good and bad deeds, food, company, caste, culture, education etc.

Attributes and their functions :

As we have seen before ¹Citta, ²Ahankāra, ³Mana, ⁴Buddhī, ⁵Jñānendriya (senses of knowledge), ⁶Karmendriya (senses of action) and body are made up of the Sattva, Rajas and Tamas Guṇa. Hence, there is unfailing influence of these attributes on whatever work we do with our mind, and other organs. We shall now see how it functions:

Sattva :

By the upsurge of the Sattva-Guṇa senses obtain health and vigor, mind obtains happiness and intellect obtains knowledge. Due to this man becomes the door of good deeds and obtains good fruit.

Rajas :

When Rajas grows in excess man becomes active in doing deeds to attain things he wants. Rājas man is never satisfied with anything he gets because he has greed and temptation in excess. He becomes unhappy because of dissatisfaction.

Tamas :

When Tamas exceeds ignorance, carelessness, idleness, sleepiness etc. emerge. Because of ignorance Tāmas man can not differentiate Dharma from Adharma, truth from untruth,

good from bad; or beneficial from harmful. Consequently, man begins to behave disorderly. As a result of this he obtains quite mean and ignoble fruit.

Bondage of Guṇa :

Tama being the most harmful is considered a low-level attribute. Hence, Tāmas man is also considered as man of low-level. In comparison with the Tama the Rajas is less harmful. Hence, it is considered as a middle type of Guṇa. Rājas man is a man of middle level. In comparison with these two guṇas Sattva is the best. So, Sāttvika man is a man of high level. Better than these three levels Nirguṇa is the excellent level. In the Gītā Bhagavān says :

Emerged from Prakṛti the quality of Sattva, Rajas and Tama bind the being that is the conscious particle of Brahma.

Hence it is proved that howsoever excellent may the Sattva be, it is after all one of the attributes of Prakṛti. And, because of these attributes man has to suffer bondage. Explaining how attributes bind man in bondages Bhagavān says in the Gītā :

Man thinks that it is he who did it. This is the greatest ignorance of man. In fact Sattva, Rajas and Tamas attributes of Prakṛti lead man to do the work which is respective to them.

If horses are joined to a chariot without a driver, the horses may draw the chariot to any direction. The horse that is stronger can drag the chariot in the direction it likes. In this state the poor, helpless charioteer sitting in may have to be dragged wherever horses may drag him. Exactly alike is the state of the soul.

The attributes of Sattva, Rajas and Tama force the being to do whatever they like. The being, becoming helpless. Let us see how it is so.

As seen before, the attribute of Sattva enlightens its beholder. So, whether they are good or bad, useful or useless, whatever incidents take place around us the attribute of Sattva by its very nature gives knowledge of every incident through the senses even if it is not necessary for us to know them every time. The attribute of Rajas produces greed. A greedy person can never have peace. Greed lashes man to run here and there until he dies. The function of the attributes of Tama is to engender ignorance. Ignorance is harmful to man in all the ways. The soul, however, is Aprākṛta that is to say he is over and above of three Guṇas. But, Alas! it has been caught and imprisoned in the body made up of earthly body. The soul has to be led wherever attributes drag him. Thus, the soul is bound by Guṇa.

Nirguṇa :

Thus, we have seen how Guṇas enforce the soul to

do what they like and tie the soul in bondages. This is the very reason why Bhagavān considers as the best what is Nirguṇa or Guṇātīta—the state of being attribute-less or being beyond attributes. Being Nirguṇa or Guṇātīta means : being free from the influences of all the three earthly attributes of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas and being lost in the devotion of Bhagavān.

How can one be Nirguṇa ?

To obtain the state of being attribute-less, one has to reach from the ignoble state to the excellent state. That is to say: one has to reach the state of Rājas from Tāmasa, from Rājasa to Sāttvika and from Sāttvika to Nirguṇa. This is the order from the ignoble state to the excellent state.

Thus we have discussed the nature of attributes, their functions, bondages of attributes, and salvation by attributes. Before discussing how differences arise in the form of devotion because of the influence of attributes; we have to take into account, very briefly, how variation arises in devotion because of differences in the sects.

3. Differences in sects :

Every sect of devotion holds unique perspective towards the nature of devotion. Therefore, if devotion is performed following any of the paths of Puṣṭi, Pravāha and Maryādā propounded by Bhagavān or following Sampradāyas propounded by ŚrīRāmānujācārya, ŚrīMadhvācārya, ŚrīNimbārkācārya etc.

variation in devotion takes place. For example: regarding devotion, Puṣṭimārga puts great stress on its aspect of affection for ŚrīKṛṣṇa which can be obtained only by His grace. Whereas in the path of Maryādā there is predominance of scriptural rules and laws in devotion. Similarly, some Ācāryas of devotional sects preach to perform devotion as a mean to obtain liberation. Whereas, devotion itself is salvation says ŚrīVallabhācārya. So, he instructs to perform devotion only for the sake of devotion, not for any other purpose. Thus, we can understand that because of different beliefs of different Ācāryas wide variety is seen in the nature of devotion.

Kinds of devotion :

Because of differences in nature, Guṇa and paths four kinds of devotion are chiefly narrated in ŚrīBhāgavata Purāṇa.

1. Sāttvika Devotion 2. Rājasa Devotion 3. Tāmasa Devotion and 4. Nirguṇa Devotion.

1. Sāttvika-Devotion: Devotion that is performed for destroying sins, for making dedication of the fruits of actions; or as an inevitable duty is called 'Sāttvika-Devotion'.

2. Rājasa-Devotion: Devotion that is performed for obtaining wealth and affluence or for excellent worlds like heaven etc., or for praise and power is called 'Rājasa-Devotion'.

3. Tāmasa-Devotion: Devotion that is performed with evil sentiments like to do harm to others, to deceive people

by making a show of devotion or for the sake of jealousy etc. is called 'Tāmasa-Devotion'.

4. Nirguṇa - Puṣṭi - Devotion: The devotion that is performed lovingly without having desire to obtain any kind of fruit and by concentrating mind in the Supreme - Being Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa is called Nirguṇa-Puṣṭi-Devotion.

Nirguṇa-Puṣṭi-Devotion is also known by the name of 'Ahaitukī' or 'Animiltā' devotion. A wish to obtain any kind of fruit is called Hetu or Nimitta. Devotion in which there is no Hetu or Nimitta of any kind is called 'Ahaitukī' or 'Animittā' devotion. The very Nirguṇa devotion, to which Bhagavān has considered as the best kind of devotion in Bhāgavata Purāṇa, has been preached by ŚrīVallabhācārya by the name of Puṣṭi - devotion.

Nirguṇa - Puṣṭi - devotion the best :

Narrating the excellence of Nirguṇa-Puṣṭi-Devotion in ŚrīBhāgavata Bhagavān says :

Though my Nirguṇa devotees consider my worship as the very fruit do not ask for any kind of liberation from me but when I bestow upon them with love on my own accord, liberation in the form of ¹Sālokya - Mukti, ²Sārṣṭi - Mukti, ³Sāmīpy - Mukti or ⁴Sāyujy - Mukti my devotees are not ready to accept any

kind of liberation at the cost of my service. This itself is recognized as Bhakti-Yoga of ultimate type and as independent fruit. By this Bhakti-Yoga the devotee becomes free from the influences of all the three Guṇa and attains devout sentiment as the final fruit.

Kinds of Nirguṇa - Puṣṭi - devotion :

In the very beginning of the creation Bhagavān has made different kinds of beings chiefly ingrained with differences of Puṣṭi - nature, Maryādā - nature and Pravāha - nature. Moreover, He has created beings with mixed-nature by blending these three kinds of nature. Hence, the being in whom some other nature has been mixed alongwith his chief nature is called a *Miśra - jīva*, while a being who holds only one nature is called a *Śuddha - jīva*.

Because of differences in nature of Puṣṭi - beings difference in kinds of Nirguṇa - Puṣṭi - Devotion comes into being. Hence, it is necessary to understand the kinds of beings. The following chart will make easy to understand differences of beings.

BEING :

a. Śuddha

1. Puṣṭi
2. Maryādā
3. Pravāhī

b. Miśra

1. Puṣṭi - Puṣṭi
2. Maryādā - Puṣṭi
3. Pravāha - Puṣṭi

1. Puṣṭi - Puṣṭi - beings : The beings that are graced with knowledge of Bhagavāna and of such all matters that are useful in worship; and who have utmost affection for ŚrīKṛṣṇa are called Puṣṭi - Puṣṭi - Beings.

2. Maryādā - Puṣṭi - beings : Those who are free from worldly attachment and are devoted to hearing and singing glory of Bhagavān; but in comparison with Puṣṭi - Puṣṭi - Beings whose ratio of affection is low are called 'Maryādā - Puṣṭi - beings'.

3. Pravāha - Puṣṭi - beings : Those Puṣṭi - beings who are specially interested in rites and rituals regarding Bhagavān's worship; and who are having very little ratio of love in Bhagavān comparing to Maryādā - Puṣṭi - beings are called 'Pravāha - Puṣṭi - Beings'.

After this much background we shall revert to the original topic. When mixed Puṣṭi - beings adopt the course of Nirguṇa - devotion, that too acquires different forms because of the different nature of Puṣṭi - beings. But desirelessness and selflessness are permanently rooted in all forms of Nirguṇa - Devotion.

There are four sub-divisions of Nīrguṇa-devotion on the bases of differences of Puṣṭi-beings.

1. **Puṣṭi - Puṣṭi - devotion** : Firmly and deeply affectionate worship of Bhagavān that is performed with proper knowledge of matters such as Bhagavān, His Līlā, partakers of Līlā (devotees of Vṛja etc.), places of Līlā (Gokula, Vṛndāvan etc.), the universe, beings etc. is called 'Puṣṭi - Puṣṭi - devotion'.
2. **Maryādā - Puṣṭi - devotion** : Hearing, remembering and singing Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇ's divine glories with respect and love is called 'Maryādā - Puṣṭi - Devotion'.
3. **Pravāha - Puṣṭi - devotion** : Bhagavān's worship and remembrance etc. performed only for the sake of doing a duty without much affection and knowledge of greatness of Bhagavān etc. is called 'Maryādā - Puṣṭi - Devotion'.
4. **Śuddha - Pusti - devotion** : When Bhagavān bestows upon any being His love by way of manifestation or otherwise, the being becomes deeply attached to Bhagavāna with pure-hearted love like Vṛaja-devotees. And he becomes involved deeply in Bhagavān's worship and remembrance etc. Therefore, the upsurge of the deepest love for Bhagavān with its aftermath of natural and spontaneous worship and remembrance of the lord

is called 'Śuddha - Puṣṭi - devotion'.

Having interest in Bhagavān's worship and remembrances means interest in the devotional path of Puṣṭi. One can have this kind of liking only through the grace and will of Bhagavān. It is not necessary that devotion of all Puṣṭi-devotees be Puṣṭi - Puṣṭi - devotion. Eventhough, their interest in the devotion confirms that Bhagavān wants to place them at the high level of devotion. Hence, such beings should make honest efforts to enhance their devotion. This will raise them from Pravāha - Puṣṭi - Devotion to Maryādā - Puṣṭi - Devotion and from Maryādā - Puṣṭi - Devotion to Puṣṭi - Puṣṭi - Devotion. Thus, step-by-step they can reach the highest level of devotion. Only that being upon whom Bhagavān wishes to bestow his full grace can obtain Śuddha - Puṣṭi - Devotion.

Hence, in his treatise 'Puṣṭi - Pravāha - Maryādābheda' ŚrīVallabhācārya says :

Śuddhāḥ premṇāti durlabhāḥ

Meaning : Pure Puṣṭi beings are extremely rare.

Stating the characteristics of pure Puṣṭi-devotion in ŚrīBhāgavata Bhagavān says :

As the water of the river Gangā flows incessantly towards the sea, my devotees, just at hearing my glories become engaged with

my worship and remembrance without any selfishness and impediment; it is called Nirguṇa - Bhakti.

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1. Citta: An internal organ capable of having experience of soul and by that which makes other internal organs, external organs and the body sentient.
 2. Antaḥkaraṇa: An internal organ that synthesizes internal and external tendencies and from consciousness to the functioning power that does the work of activating the body and senses.
 3. Mana: The tendency of Antaḥkaraṇa which causes desire and wavering between options.
 4. Buddhi: The tendency of Antaḥkaraṇa that reacts against the sensations produced by the senses and internal & external activities in the form of decision, doubt, illusion, ignorance, sleep etc.
 5. Jñānendriya: eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin — these five organs are called 'Jñānendriya', senses of knowledge.
 6. Karmendriya: Speech, hands, legs, anus and reproductive organs. These five senses are called 'Karmendriya', the senses of action.

Books for further reading:

Subodhinī commentary on the third canto of Śrī Bhāgavata composed by Śrī Vallabhācārya.

Puṣṭi - Pravāha - Maryādābheda in Śoḍaśagrantha.

Śrī Bhagavad Gītā, chapter: 14, 17, 18.

Puṣṭi-bhaktiviveka and Puṣṭibhakti Adhikāra Viveka from Pramaya-ratnārṇava composed by Śrī Lālūbhāṭṭājī.

Bhakti-hamṣa & Bhakti-hetu-nirṇaya by Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthājī.

Initiation

Bestowal of Mantra of the name of one's favourite God through a Guru upon his disciple for his well-being is called 'Dikṣā'—Initiation.

Initiation = Bestowal of Mantra.

According to this definition, initiation is a bestowal of mantra. Guru bestows mantra ceremoniously, while the disciple receives it. Generally one who bestows has no right of ownership on an object that is given as donation. In initiation, the initiated is having the ownership-right on the Mantra and the initiator Guru too, retains his right on it. However in scriptures as well as in tradition, initiation is considered as a distinctive (special) kind of Mantradāna (bestowal of mantra).

Dāan = Donation :

In every Saṃpradāya great importance is given to donation. Scriptures of Saṅgātana-dharma too, discuss in detail the importance of donation and prescribe rules and regulations about giving and receiving it. Chiefly there are six aspects of donation according to the scriptures.

1. Dāta = Donator
2. Pratighṛhītā = Donee or Receiver of donation

3. Deya Vastu = Objects in donation such as food, money, Mantra etc.
4. Sṭhāan = The place where donation is given and received.
5. Samaya = Time when donation is given and received.
6. Upakaraṇa & Bhāvanā = The way & the sentiment by which donation is given & received.

The bestower and the receiver of donation should give and take it after due consideration of all above six aspects. The best and the most fruitful donation is that in which a proper thing is given through a proper person to a proper man at a proper place and time with proper ceremony and faith in a satisfying way. Here, the word 'proper' does not mean what is proper for you and me. 'Proper' means that what is proper from scriptural point of view. Contrary to this, if an improper object is donated to an improper man at improper place and time, in that case such type of donation is condemned by scriptures.

As it is said, initiation is a distinctive tradition of the bestowal of Mantra. Hence, as it is necessary to give due consideration to the aforesaid six scriptural aspects while making donation of any object, it is also necessary to do so as regard's the bestowal of Mantra.

Six aspects of the donation of Mantra :

1. Bestower of Mantra :

Guru is the donator of Mantra. Before having initiation,

it is necessary for a disciple to ascertain whether the Guru holds scriptural qualification as well as the qualifications determined by the respective Saṁpradāya (religious sect) to bestow initiation.

The propounders of all Saṁpradāyas prescribe rules for the good of their disciples in their religious works as to who are qualified and who are not qualified to bestow Mantra of their respective Saṁpradāyas. For example, in his work 'Sarvanirṇaya' of 'Tattvārtha-dīpa-nibandha' Śrī Vallabhācārya has discussed as to which qualifications his descendents should hold to bestow initiations of Surrender and Dedication. Those who wish to receive initiation should go through such religious works and test the eligibility of the guru. We shall discuss this in the coming chapter.

In addition to the qualification determined by the Saṁpradāya, there are certain common qualifications equally acceptable to any Saṁpradāya to test worth of a guru. For example: the disciple should ensure—

- a. Whether the initiator possesses thorough knowledge of the doctrines of that Saṁpradāya.
- b. Whether the initiator, who instructs people to follow doctrines of his Saṁpradāya, himself follows them sincerely!
- c. Whether the initiator is alert enough to remove ignorance of his disciples!

—these three are the minimum qualifications that are 'Must' for any initiator of any Saṁpradāya.

2. *The receiver of Mantra:*

As disciple should test the qualification of a guru before having initiation, the Guru too, should test the eligibility of the disciple and should ascertain whether he is qualified to receive initiation.

How so ever excellent the thing may be, it cannot be given away to an unworthy person. It must be given only to one who can appreciate its importance and can maintain and use it in a proper manner. Hence the rule in scriptures that donation should be given to a worthy person only. One who bestows donation to an unworthy person is blamed as a defaulter in scriptures.

Many things can be accomplished by wealth. It can be beneficial only if some gentle person possesses it. Wealth in the hands of wicked people like a drunkard or a gambler can prove disastrous and can make hell of a heaven. Same is the case also with initiation. Bestowed upon an unworthy person, initiation will indeed be fruitless. Moreover, an offence of bestowing initiation upon an improper person will stick to the Guru as a blot. So, if a well-deserving disciple is not available, the guru need not be lavish in bestowing it upon any person that comes to him. The maker of an excellent thing wishes that the object made by him may always remain

with a worthy person and may not fall in the hands of a wicked fellow, better be it lost. This is analogous with the original founder Ācārya, Bhagavan or the authors of scriptures of the ancient traditional system of Mantra-dīkṣā. They also entertain this type of feeling, in this situation, if preceptors begin bestowing mantra to any person carelessly, ignorantly or with a desire to fatten the number of their disciples without any thought of worth or worthlessness, it will be against the decorum established by the original founder Ācārya, Bhagavān or author of scriptures. In this case, it is the guru who has to suffer consequence of this heinous offence.

3. *Deya Vastu = Bestow-able object :*

In initiation, Guru bestows Mantra upon his disciple. The name of the favourite god comprised in initiation formula is called 'Mantra-bhāga' i.e. the portion of Mantra while the remaining portion is called 'Upadeśa' i.e. instruction. The initiation Mantra plays an extremely important part in the seeker's 'Sādhanā' (religious course). It helps the seeker ¹to remember his favourite god, ²to perform the duties of the Saṁpradāya and ³to know oneself. Just as a map becomes very useful to a pilgrim of an unknown path similarly, for a seeker, initiation Mantra serves the purpose of a map. As the map guides the pilgrim to find out his destination, the way to reach up to his destination and the distance he has covered up to a particular time, similarly, the initiation Mantra provides guidelines to the seeker to find out his

⁴goal ⁵the means by which he can achieve his goal and ⁶how far he has advanced on his way to final goal. The disciple who does not possess the knowledge of the initiation Mantra and who does not recite it goes astray as a pilgrim without a map is misled to wonder here and there at-random. So the disciple must have the knowledge and daily remembrance of the initiation Mantra.

Secrecy of the mantra :

According to the rule of scriptures it is necessary to maintain the secrecy of the Mantra. Hence, the uninitiated should not be allowed to have the knowledge of the initiation Mantra. For this reason, uttering initiation Mantra openly in public, printing and writing and taping in instruments like audio-video recorders etc. are forbidden. Such rules are to be observed in the Saṁpradāya with a view to maintain the significance, the dignity and the sanctity of Mantra. Such kinds of etiquettes are followed in our social life also. There are certain special rules about singing the national anthem. The abovementioned rules regarding the pronouncement of initiation Mantra can be understood in that context.

4. *The place of initiation :*

The occasion of initiation is an extremely holy event for both the Guru and the disciple. The place of initiation, too, must necessarily be holy so as to suit to the occasion. The place where the peace, holiness and devout sentiment of faith begin to flash in the mind can be regarded suitable

for initiation. If initiation takes place amidst the crowd of a marriage-festival, in the atmosphere of hustle and bustle or amidst the handle and jostle of a throng, the disciple, far from being enlightened by the significance of initiation and duties of the initiated, will not even feel a thrill of being gratified and fortunate to have obtained some excellent and rare thing. Hence, the bestowal of initiation at any random place or in any type of untoward atmosphere will be, by all means, improper.

5. Time for initiation :

One chief purpose of bestowing initiation upon the disciple is to enable him to go ahead on the way of the course of Saṁpradāya. Hence, the time when the disciple is prepared to follow the course of Saṁpradāya is considered as an appropriate time for the bestowal of initiation. A child is allowed to have admission to a school only when he is eligible to pursue his study remaining present in the school.

There are a number of danger-spots in bestowing initiation before time. For example, an earthen vessel is used for storing water. If instead of a baked vessel, an unbaked earthen vessel is used for storing water, it's but natural the all water will spilt away and unbaked one as it is, it may possibly break away. Similarly if the vessel is too small, excess water will spilt. This analogy will enable the Guru to note one thing. No doubt, the disciple may have been interested in the Marga, and he may also be wishing keenly to receive

initiation. But if he is not properly disposed to receive initiation and follow duties of the Saṁpradāya, or if circumstances are not favourable for him to observe his duties well because of mental, physical, familial and social reasons, the Guru should not hasten and show undue liberality in bestowing initiation upon such a disciple. If the Guru does not take this matter into consideration, the condition of the initiated disciple will be exactly like that of an unbaked earthen vessel, which of course, receives water but can't retain it. Hence, it should be carefully noted that the initiation which is bestowed before due time, turns up fruitless as well as harmful to the disciple.

Presently in Puṣṭi Mārga there are number of people who have been initiated in a very small age or in immature stage. Some of them do not even remember whether they have received initiation. Some of them do not know the name of the initiator, Śrī Vallabhācārya, their deity Śrī Kṛṣṇa, doctrines of Saṁpradāya or the Mantra of initiation! Can there be any greater failure of initiation than this? Again, some people who are, of course, ripe in age but quite unripe in the knowledge of doctrines and Ācārya and the favourite deity as well as in observance of duties, are not in position to avail of any benefit in their life even though they have obtained initiation that is rare even to gods. Initiation obtained by such people meets with failure and hence it is valueless. From all this, both the Guru and the disciple should understand that success of initiation that is given and received at improper

time becomes almost uncertain. Perhaps guru may show readiness and liberality to bestow initiation, but if disciple feels 1) that he himself is not adequately equipped with the knowledge of doctrines of Saṁpradāya to carry out the duties of Saṁpradāya or 2) that though he possesses adequate knowledge of the doctrines of Saṁpradāya, but he does not inclined to live his life in accordance with the doctrines of Saṁpradāya (with reference to Puṣṭi Saṁpradāya: Renouncement of Anyāśraya i.e. resort in other gods, Bhagavān's remembrance-Kīrtana, good-company, one-pointed-resort in Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Abandonment of the undedicated objects etc.) then the disciple should think twice and make no hurry to receive initiation. To get admission in any Saṁpradāya one is to abide by three conditions:

1. Initiation
2. Abandonment of what is contrary to Saṁpradāya
3. Living life in accordance with doctrines of Saṁpradāya

Initiation is granted to the disciple as a formal recognition to join Saṁprāya and to begin and carry on the course in accordance with Saṁpradāya. Therefore, if any person's conduct is not in accord with sect even if he receives initiation, the admission of such a person in Saṁpradāya is not worth - consideration. The initiation in which there is no abidance by abandonment of forbidden conduct and no abidance by adherence to prescribed conduct is of no importance from

the view-point of Saṁpradāya. If a student remains avsent continuously for a long time, his name is withdrawn from the school-register, and his admission is treated as cancelled. His regular absence in school indicates that he is no more interested in his study. Similarly, if the disciple does not follow rules of conduct according to the doctrines of Saṁpradāya even after he has received initiation, it is proven that he is not interested in Saṁpradāya. Be it not forgotten that initiation which is void of adherence to the tents of Saṁpradāya is utterly meaningless. Hence, when any disciple is fully prepared to follow the course of Saṁpradāya, then only Guru should bestow initiation upon him. One pretty incident narrated in the stories of eighty-four Vaiṣṇvas of Vallabhācārya explains this in a striking way.

Naraharadāsa (N.D.) was born in a Brāhmaṇa family. He developed Jeep faith and loving devotion for Bhagavān Śrī Jagannāthajī (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) from the childhood. When his father become aged, one day he said to N.D. sarcastically: "Narhara! very often you go to behold Śrī Jagannāthajī. Does he give anything to you? You do not earn anything. I spend money upon your your pilgrimage. If I do not give you any money, you will die of hunger!". Hearing condemnation of Bhagavān N.D. left his father's home. He made a resolve in his mind: "from now onwards I shall eat what

ŚrīJagannāthajī will give. I shall show to my father how capable ŚrīJagannatharāyajī is". Meantime by the grace of ŚrīJagannāthajī, N.D. happened to meet ŚrīVallabhācārya. He pleaded: "Gracious Master, take me in your refuge, make me your disciple". ŚrīVallabhācārya said: "Naraharadās! there is disquiet in your mind. It is not free from attachment to money. So, the name of Bhagavān (the initiation Mantra) will not bring any fruit to you. Come to me after you have attained peace in your mind. Then I shall make you my disciple".

When the disciple becomes fully ready to follow the course of Saṁpradāya along with the proper knowledge, it is the proper time to bestow initiation upon him. The abovementioned words of ŚrīVallabhācārya remarkably substantiate this doctrine.

6. The process and the sentiment :

The occasion of initiation is a divine occasion for both the Guru and the disciple. After the ceremony of initiation is over, a new life starts for the Guru and the disciple. Before initiation both were ordinary acquaintees to each other, but subsequent to it, the donator of Mantra becomes Guru whereas the receiver becomes follower of the Saṁpradāya. Subsequent to the ceremony of the initiation the reciprocal responsibilities of both of them are multiplied.

Disciple is given new birth through initiation to tread upon the path of religion. For this reason, religious scriptures glorify Guru as father. Just as a father affectionately looks after the nourishment, protection and development of his child, similarly, Guru, too, looks after the spiritual nourishment of his disciple by providing education of religious doctrines, spiritual protection by giving instruction to keep away from unrighteousness and spiritual development by infusing in him the inspiration to tread on the path of religion. The ceremony of initiation establishes such holy relation between the Guru and the disciple. Hence, it is necessary that the process (Upakrama) to accomplish it and devout sentiment of the Guru and the disciple who partake in it be extremely pure and sacred. One striking incident depicted in the stories of 252 Vaisṇavas explains this thing in a beautiful way:

One day, during discourse ŚrīViṭṭhalana-thajī said :

"The initiation does help, through the grace of ŚrīVallabhācārya, in accomplishing firm resort in Bhagavān, and in obtaining the fruit of Puṣṭi sect if it is received by the pure minded disciple and bestowed by the Guru with purity in mind".

This instruction made a touching effect upon the heart of one Kṣatriya. When

Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī was seated alone, he requested him for the bestowal of Ātmanivedana Dikṣā (initiation of self-dedication). Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī called for his eldest son Śrī Giridharajī and asked him to bestow initiation upon that Vaiṣṇava. Next day, after initiation, when both Śrī Giridharjī and the Kṣatriya presented themselves before Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī, he could see through his divine vision that the initiation of Ātmanivedana had not been accomplished with purity of mind. He asked Śrī Giridharjī: "Let the Kṣatriya observe fast and the initiation be given again". Śrī Giridharajī did accordingly and then both came before Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī. Yet again he repeated the same thing that Ātmanivedana has not been performed with due purity. This time he gave special instruction to his son: "one fast be observed by you and one more by Kṣatriya; and thereafter initiation be given". Both of them observed fast accordingly. Śrī Giridharajī bestowed initiation once more time. Again, when they stood before Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī, this time too, Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī said that still Kṣatriya had not attained purity of mind and that he should be asked to observe fast again for initiation. When this was done, Kṣatriya's mind turned divine and attached to Bhagavan!

This incident explains us that both the bestower (Guru) and the receiver (disciple) should have attained purity of mind for the successful performance of the ceremony of initiation. With his mind free from malicious sentiments of greed, fraud, pride, rivalry, hypocrisy etc, Guru should bestow initiation with humility and trust, holding devout pure and sacred sentiments for his disciple's well-being. The same way, the disciple too, should receive initiation through utter humility and faith, should follow the doctrine of his Saṁpradāya and should hold devout sentiments to seek his welfare.

The tradition of initiation in Saṁpradāyas: What for ?

Some reasons behind the tradition of initiation in Saṁpradāya can be counted as under:

1. Saṁkalpa—Resolve
2. Mānyatā—Recognition
3. Yogyatā—Qualification and
4. Pavitratā—Purity.

Saṁkalpa—Resolve:

Any work that is to be done can be carried out successfully, if its doer has made firm resolve to accomplish it. Firm determination is a half success. But it should be noted that a resolve can result into success only if it is backed by complete understanding of the work that is to be done and one's capacity to do it.

Initiation is also a sort of a resolve, a firm resolve, and an oath that is undertaken before Bhagavān in the presence of a Guru as a witness. Hence, if a disciple receives initiation in a proper way, whole heartedly and without any hypocrisy, his spiritual well-being does not remain far from him.

Mānyatā—Recognition :

Every institution is established keeping in view certain definite aims and objects. To fulfil such objects, a constitution is planned by the founder / founders of the institution. One who desires his membership in such institutions has to obtain its recognition in a systematic way. The recognized members of the institutions are eligible to have various benefits such as facilities, relief, patronage and protection. Non-members are not eligible to avail of such benefits. The person has to accept aims and objects, the system of working and the constitution of the institution to obtain recognition or the membership of the institution. He has to pass through the test of eligibility. Then only he is accepted as a member of the institution by the management. Saṁpradāya is also a kind of religious institution. Saṁpradāya aims at spiritual well-being by pin-pointing a religious way to ignorant religious people. To fulfil its spiritual aim, every Saṁpradāya adopts a distinguished system (such as devotion, austerity, action, knowledge etc.) for the accomplishment of its goal. Unlike common people the seeker should lead his life that must be spiritual and compatible with his aim. To help a seeker to live his life in consonance with his aim doctrines prescribing

rules of conduct such as do and don't etc. are established by the propounders of the Dharma - Saṁpradāyas. One who wishes to be a member of such Saṁpradāyas, has to obtain recognition as its follower from the head of the Saṁpradāya, just as a person has to obtain recognition as a member of any institution from its management. There are three minimum conditions to obtain this recognition.

- a. The seeker (follower / disciple) must be desirous of receiving initiation for the achieving the goals (e.g. liberation or devotion etc.) to which the sect wishes to lead him.
- b. The seeker must be fully prepared to follow, without any changes, the course (recital, austerity, yoga, action, knowledge, devotion etc.) prescribed by the Saṁpradāya for the fulfilment of goal / fruit.
- c. The seeker who desires to receive initiation must be prepared to live his life by holding full faith and loyalty in the doctrines that have been established by ancient Ācāryas to live life as a seeker.

On who is ready to fulfill all the three above-mentioned conditions is given through his Guru recognition as a follower of the Saṁpradāya, according to the initiation-procedure of Saṁpradāya. One can avail a lot of benefits by having this type of recognition. The following illustration will be helpful to understand it.

There are, generally, two categories of people that reside

in any country. Category one includes the people who hold legal documents (Ration card, Birth-certificate, Identity card etc.) identifying them as citizens of the country. Category two, includes the people who are not the aboriginal citizens of the country but who have intruded into it from other neighbouring and distant countries. Such intruders, generally, do not hold any legal document to show them as citizens of the country. For this reason, these intruders are deprived of benefits which are available to recognized citizen of the country. As recognized citizen they are allowed to have legal right to vote, to possess property-land etc. and to have, to sell, to buy and to make will and to avail a good number of other government facilities. Such recognized citizen is considered as a member of the whole nation. The nation is responsible for his protection and well-being. On the other hand the intruders are not allowed to have any of the abovementioned rights and facilities. Nobody trusts them. They are considered as criminals in the eyes of law.

One who has entered into Saṁpradāya by receiving initiation is considered as a recognized follower of Saṁpradāya. The initiated disciple avails all benefits as a follower of the Saṁpradāy just as a recognized citizen receives benefits in the country. The Guru and all his disciples consider him as a member of their religion. Just as the members of the family are ready for ever to help any family member who is placed in difficult and fearful situation or who is rendered incapable. Similarly, Guru and his co-followers are always ready to

give guidance and co-operation to the newly initiated follower in Saṁpradāya.

Pavitratā—Sanctity:

To perform religious duty sanctity is must. It should be remembered, here, that there is lot of difference between purity and cleanliness. For example, while taking a bath a person may shampoo his hair and apply medicated soap and have cleanliness. But a person who performs a religious duty can attain purity only when he concentrates on Bhagavan with pure in mind, takes Caraṇāmṛta (nectar of feet) and affixes a Tilaka on the forehead. What is called cleanliness in common practical life is not always purity. Rules regarding sanctity and purity are narrated in scriptures. One can attain sanctity by putting these rules into practice. There are two kinds of sanctity:

I. Internal purity

II. Eternal purity.

I. Internal Purity:

Internal purity can be obtained by hearing, remembering and singing the names-Līlā-Guṇa of Bhagavan, by observing fast, by penitence and repentance and by auspicious resolve.

II. External purity:

It can be obtained by taking bath in accordance with scriptural procedure, sprinkling water by pronouncing Mantras (Mārjana) etc.

Both kinds of purity can be attained through the initiation of Mantras.

- Bath taken for the purpose of holy work like receiving initiation, purifies the body.
- The disciple attains the internal purity of his body by observing fast with faith.
- The repentance that “I was deprived of such excellent thing (like initiation) up to this much time” purifies the mind of the disciple.
- The disciple receives initiation as a resolve to carry out his religious duties. The body and the mind of the initiated disciple which have been purified by bath, fast and repentance become worthy of receiving Mantra by the auspicious resolve to follow rules of his Saṁpradāya.
- The holy Mantra of the name of his favorite God heard from his Guru’s mouth and uttered by his own mouth inspires him to carry out his religious duties.

Qualification :

Bhagavān, in the world of His Līlā, has made the beings different natured. Together with it, Bhagavān has also created different paths of religion so that beings may obtain their welfare in accordance with their respective nature. For example Puṣṭi beings can follow the devotional path of Puṣṭi and Maryādā beings can follow scriptural paths of action, knowledge and worship for this purpose.

An obedient servant does his work as a duty entrusted

by his master. He believes that he does his duty for his own good. Similarly, in this world of Bhagavān’s Līlā, every being has to know his own nature (the sentiment in seed-form, interest in Mārga, choice etc.) and should enter into Saṁpradāya in conformity with it. All beings attain welfare in this way. Contrary to this, in spite of their divergent interest and nature, if all beings start to follow one and the same Saṁpradāya, they can never achieve their goal. To avoid such adversity, special arrangements are made within every Saṁpradāya of granting initiation so that every being may enter into the Mārga according to his nature, eligibility and interest and can attain his own welfare.

Initiation serves the purpose of entrance-door for any Saṁpradāya. Before giving initiation, Guru should see whether the nature of the seeker will suit to his Saṁpradāya or whether he is worthy to enter into his Saṁpradāya. The Guru is the protector of Saṁpradāya. Just as a protector or a doorkeeper of the house performs his duty (as whom to allow and whom not to allow) similarly, it is the duty of Guru to disallow an unworthy person to enter into his Saṁpradāya and to allow only a worthy person to enter into it. Just as a doorkeeper inquires about the name, place, work etc. of the visitor and allows him to enter the home after having permission from his master, Guru also tests the eligibility of the seeker. He grants initiation only to those whom he finds fit for prescribed standard of eligibility. Initiation given to an un-worthy person proves harmful to the path,

the preceptor and to other disciples.

Thus, we have discussed three matters -
 definition of initiation,
 six aspects of the bestowal of initiation and
 why the method of initiation is adopted by
 Saṁpradāyas.

Next to this, the topic of initiation with special reference
 to Puṣṭi Saṁpradāya will be discussed.

Initiation of Puṣṭi Sect

If we look at the stage, we find several characters on it. Every actor standing on the stage has to play his role that is pre-decided by the play director. In other words, not a single actor that stands on the stage remains there without purpose. Similarly, all the beings that play their parts on the wide stage of the Līlā-world of Bhagavān are created by him with a special purpose. Hence, every being has to play his role as pre-decided by Bhagavān. Showing the god-given purpose of the creation of Puṣṭi-beings in his treatise 'Puṣṭi-pravāha-maryādā-bheda' Śrī Vallabhācārya says:

Bhagavad-rūpa-sevārtham tat-sṛṣṭiḥ

Meaning: The world of Puṣṭi-beings has been created for performing service of Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

There lies such an excellent purpose behind the creation of Puṣṭi-beings! But Alas! That purpose was become worthless as Puṣṭi-beings were flung far away from Bhagavān. They were contaminated with Bhagavān's power: Māyā (nescience power) and hence were lying in the pit of ignorance. They had become ignorant of Bhagavān and of their own-self. Consequently, they also become ignorant of their relation with Bhagavān and the duties towards Bhagavān. Ultimately,

they were caught in worldly trap. Bhagavān was deeply touched to see such pitiable state of his extremely beloved Puṣṭi-beings, the purpose of whose creation was to perform his service. In order to turn Puṣṭi-beings towards fulfilling their purpose, Bhagavān ordained Śrī Vallabhācārya to disclose the devotional path of Puṣṭi.

Two Initiations :

Śrī Vallabhācārya descended upon earth with the divine purpose. But, when he saw that Puṣṭi-beings are heavily laden with ignorance and sentiments of I-ness and my-ness and therefore, before joining them into Bhagavān's service, he felt necessary to make them worthy of Bhagavān's service. That is, he felt necessary for Puṣṭi-beings to have knowledge to the basic doctrines of the path that they are going to follow, such as resort of Bhagavān, abandonment of resort in other gods, dedication of all belongings, abandonment of what is not dedicated, abandonment of bad company etc. At the same time, it was also necessary for Puṣṭi beings to make the atmosphere of the house and family suitable to the service of Bhagavan and the mind worthy of performing service with Viveka (discrimination), Dhairya (patience) and Āśraya (resort). To obtain all these merits, Śrī Vallabhācārya made provision of the path of Śraṇa (surrender) in Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Saṁpradāya. The path of Śraṇa is as important in Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Saṁpradāya as important is the provision of primary schools in modern educational system for advance study. One who is inclined to perform Śrī Kṛṣṇa's service

can enter into Śraṇa-mārga—the path of surrender through the initiation of Aṣṭākṣara-mantra.

When the follower is fully equipped with qualification to perform Bhagavān's service by following the course of Śraṇa, he is bestowed an advance initiation of self-dedication and is made eligible to perform service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Puṣṭi-bhakti-saṁpradāya consists of 'the path of surrender' and 'the path of dedication'. Entry into both of these paths is allowed through 'the initiation of surrender' and 'the initiation of dedication'. The initiation of surrender is also named as 'Aṣṭākṣara-dīkṣā' (Initiation of Eight letters), 'Nāmadīkṣā' (initiation of Name) etc. In the same way the initiation of dedication is also known as 'Ātma-nivedana-dīkṣā' (initiation self-declaration) 'Brahma-sambandha-dīkṣā' (initiation of relation with Brahma) and 'Nāma-nivedana-dīkṣā'.

It was discussed in the earlier chapter that before making donation, consideration of six aspects of donation is necessary. With reference to this, in the devotional path of Puṣṭi, all the six aspects of donation with reference to initiation are considered at length.

Initiation of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Saṁpradāya and its six aspects :

1. Donator :

In 'Tattvārtha-dīpa-nibandha' Śrī Vallabhācārya has enumerated qualifications of the Guru of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Saṁpradāya.

He says :

¹ Kṛṣṇa-sevā-param vīksya
dambhādi-rahitam naram,
Śrībhāgavata-tattvajñam
bhajed jijñāsur ādarāt

Meaning: One should ascertain whether the man who bestows initiation is devoted to the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, whether he is void of vices like hypocrisy, greed, false prestige etc, whether he knows the essence of Bhāgavat-purāṇa. If he possesses these characteristics, he should be chosen as a Guru.

Four qualities of the bestower of Puṣṭi-bhakti-saṁpradāya's initiation are enumerated in the above verse.

1. Kṛṣṇasevā-parāyanatā (Devotedness to the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa)
2. Dambhādi-rahita (void of hypocrisy etc.)
3. Bhāgavata-tattvajña (knower of the essence of Bhāgavat)
4. Naratva (Being a man).

1. Devotedness to the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa :

Explaining this ŚrīVallabhācārya says: The Guru instructs and encourages his disciple to perform Bhagavān's service. He considers that Bhagavān's service is the best of all things. If it is so, should he himself not be devoted to Bhagavān's service? Therefore, one who is not devoted to Bhagavān's service should not be chosen as a Guru.

The essence of Ācāryacaraṇa is noteworthy: If the Guru doesn't put his teaching into his practice, such dry-as-dust instruction can't have any effect on his disciple. So the Guru must practice first what he instructs.

2. Being void of hypocrisy etc :

Discussing this characteristic of a Guru, Ācāryacaraṇa says :

It is true that the person who is devoted in ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service only can be chosen as a Guru. However, the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa must not be mere outward show to earn money and prestige. He must be free from vices such as greed, temptation, hypocrisy etc.

3. Knower of the essence of Bhāgavat :

The Guru must have the knowledge of the essence of Bhāgavat-purāṇa. Ācāryacaraṇa brings out this characteristic as under :

The devotional fruit of service can be obtained only if it is performed as dictated by Bhagavān in Bhāgavata etc. The service can never be fruitful if it is backed by sentiments of worldly or otherworldly desire, greed, prestige etc. Therefore, Guru must have knowledge of the essence of Bhāgavat so as to know the true nature of service and

sentiments associated with service.

4. *Naratva* :

In 'Śrī Sarvottamastotra' Prabhucaraṇa Śrī Viṭṭhalnāthaji writes:

Bhuvi bhakti-pracāraika-kṛte-svānvaya-kṛt-pitā

Meaning: My father Śrī Vallabhācārya has extended his lineage so that Puṣṭi-devotion may keep spreading among Puṣṭi-beings in future also.

Prabhucaraṇa's (Śrī Viṭṭhalnāthajī) statement coupled with Śrī Vallabhācārya's statement showing qualification of Guru makes clear that, the descendent of Śrī Vallabhācārya who is devoted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's service, who is void of vices of hypocrisy etc. and who knows the essence of Bhāgavat is eligible for bestowing initiation of Puṣṭi-bhakti-saṁpradāya. Here, one thing is worth considering. The lineage is consistent of both men and women. Are both the men descendents and the women descendents of Śrī Vallabhācārya eligible to bestow initiation? The doctrine in this matter is stated hereunder.

Mahāprabhu Śrī Vallabhācārya has specifically used the word 'Nara' (the man) in the verse showing qualifications of Guru. Though both women and men are descendents of Śrī Vallabhācārya, the right to bestow initiation rests with men descendents in Śrī Vallabhācārya lineage and not with

the women descendents.

Unfit for Guru-hood :

The privilege to bestow initiation indubitably enjoys descendents of Śrī Vallabhācārya. What if some of his descendents do not possess requisite characteristics of Guru-hood? Remember, he should never be chosen as a Guru simply because he is a descendent of Śrī Vallabhācārya.

Abandonment of Guru :

In one of the benedictory stanzas, characteristics of Guru have been given. The man who imparts knowledge to his disciple and removes his ignorance is called 'Guru'. The Guru-ness of any person is proved by his imparting knowledge to his disciple after bestowing initiation upon him. What is said in Tittiriya upaniṣad in this regard is worth noting. Upaniṣad says that it is learning which connects two allies: Acarya (Guru) and Aṅtevasī (disciple). Therefore learning is a 'Sādhī' (connecting factor). Connection between Guru and disciple could be accomplished only if Guru imparts learning to his disciple. So, it is the foremost and necessary duty of Guru to teach his disciple the works of Puṣṭi-bhakti-saṁpradāya's doctrines. The duties of a Guru do not come to an end merely with the bestowal of initiation if he does not teach his disciples. Hence, in 'Smṛti-candrikā' it is said by sages like Vaśiṣṭha and Yama that the Guru who does not impart knowledge to his disciple is not worthy of performing scriptural duties and rites, the Guru who has

not taught anything to his disciple even at the lapse of a year after initiation, has to suffer all the sins and of fences of his disciple. Regarding this it has been written in Gautama-dharma-sūtras: If the Guru is "an ignorant, or if he knows everything but is "lethargic in imparting knowledge to his disciple or if he is "sinner, then he should be forthwith abandoned by the disciple. How noble is this sentiment that has been shown by the great sages! How seriously the method of initiation was being treated in the religions tradition!! But today!!!

What should be done when proper Guru is not available?

What should one do if one is not in position to find even a single descendent of Śrī Vallabhācārya who possesses the characteristics of a Guru; or for any of the abovementioned reasons one has to abandon the Guru? Should he remain deprived of such an excellent path in absence of Guru? This difficult problem has been solved in the work of 'Nibandha' and in its 'Āvaraṇabhaṅga' commentary composed by Śrī Puruṣottamjī.

Since Śrī Vallabhācārya is the Guru of all the Gurus therefore one should resort only to Śrī Vallabhācārya as his Guru and should devote himself to Bhagavan's service and remembrance when not a single descendent possessing characteristics of a Guru is available. (From whom one should obtain the knowledge

of Puṣṭi-bhakti-saṁpradāya in such circumstances? Śrī Puruṣottamacaraṇa throws light upon this point and says further). Those who perform the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa of their own accord and sometimes need guidance in the matter of tenets, service etc, should approach to some senior devotee of his sect and satisfy his quarries.

In his treatise: 'Svamārgīya-śaraṇa-samarpaṇa-sevādi-nirupaṇam' Śrī Harirāyājī too writes:

If the present-time descendents of Śrī Vallabhācārya do not possess prescribed characteristics of Guru but if they impart instruction in accordance with the doctrines of Śrī Vallabhācārya who is indubitably the honest Guru, such preaching may yield fruit like that of a conscientious Guru. But it should be ascertained whether bad-company, temptation of money, pride, resort in other gods etc. have changed Guru's behaviour contrary to the doctrines of Saṁpradāya.

Hence, if the present-day preceptors impart instruction in contravention with doctrines of Śrī Vallabhācārya one should never follow such instruction. The most popular false teaching of the present-day Gurus can be listed as under:

- There are three kinds of services bodily, monitory and mental.
- In Puṣṭi-bhakti-saṁpradāya there is nothing like Devadravya.
- Public temple and public service have got recognition in Puṣṭi-bhakti-Saṁpradāya.
- Doctrines are to be followed by Vaiṣṇavas only and not by Gurus.
- Prasāda of Devadravya can be availed.
- Kathā of Bhāgavat can be arranged after the death of relatives.
- Vaiṣṇava's deity is not the Supreme Being but is seated as Guru and hence inferior to the deity of Guru.
- Gifts, food etc should be offered to the deity in Haveli.
- Service of the deity should be sponsored at Haveli.
- Nega i.e. quantity of offerings should not be curtailed.

2. Disciple :

Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa ordained ŚrīVallabhācārya to manifest the devotional path of Puṣṭi so as to dispel ignorance and worldly attachment of Puṣṭi beings and to unite them to His service for which He had created them. Therefore, devotional path of Puṣṭi has been manifested only for the Puṣṭi beings, that is, beings who are sent on earth to perform

service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. For this reason, only those who are Puṣṭi beings can be admitted into Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga.

Explaining this in his commentary on 'Siddhānta-rahasya' of ŚrīVallabhācārya ŚrīPuruṣottamajī writes :

Puṣṭi-bhakti-Saṁpradāya has been reserved only for those Puṣṭi being, who were originally (in the abode of Bhagavān) devotees of Bhagavān but who have presently been born on the earth for some reasons. Only these beings are eligible to enter into Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga. So only these Puṣṭi beings can be absolved from their sins (and obtain divine qualification to perform service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa as per Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga) through the initiation of Brahma-sambandha (no other beings can have freedom from their sins nor Bhagavān grants such qualification to any other being except Puṣṭi-being through Brahma-sambandha. In fact Brahma-sambandha does not take place if granted to non-Puṣṭi beings. ŚrīPuruṣottamajī further writes). Hence only abovementioned beings are eligible to obtain fruit of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga by performing Bhagavān's worship. Hence, Guru should see first then only such Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga beings should be initiated.

How to Identify Puṣṭi Beings ?

Only those beings upon whom Bhagavān showered his

grace for bestowing the fruit of Puṣṭi-Bhakti are called 'Puṣṭi-beings'. One can not know whether a particular being is graced by Bhagavān merely by seeing that being as there is no mark of Bhagavān's grace. Then, in what way it can be known that a particular being is graced by Bhagavān? Śrī Vallabhācārya shows the way to know that. If any being has longing to dedicate his life to the service and remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, that person should be considered as a Puṣṭi being. Śrī Vallabhācārya holds that none can have such longing without Bhagavān's grace.

Longing for Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga and its Kinds :

Those among the divine beings whom Bhagavān wishes to bring in the path of Puṣṭi-Bhakti obtains the good-company of the devotees of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga by the grace of Bhagavān. In good-company they get chance to listen, read, sing, discuss etc. the glorification of Bhagavān, His Līlā, His characteristics etc. and the illuminating characters of Śrī Vallabhācārya and Puṣṭi-devotees and the doctrines of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga. This awakens in Puṣṭi beings desire in the devotional path of Puṣṭi. Some specially graced beings, without having such incentive, develop interest in Puṣṭi-Bhakti spontaneously and intuitively. Whatever may be the case, the beings who have desire for Puṣṭi-Bhakti is worthy of having entrance in Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga.

It is the duty of Guru to ascertain whether the candidate wishing to receive initiation has innate desire for Puṣṭi sect.

He should bestow initiation upon him if he is inclined to live life dedicated to the service of Bhagavān in accordance with the doctrines of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Sampradāya. Guru must never forget that by bestowing initiation upon an unworthy person he invites his own destruction. Prabhucaraṇa Śrī Viṭṭhalanathajī says in one of Vijñaptis:

*² Vicāryaiva sadā deyaṁ kṛṣṇanāma viśeṣataḥ
avicārita dānena svayaṁ dātā vinaśyati*

Meaning: Guru should bestow initiation considering very well the worth of a disciple. He should take special care particularly in bestowing the initiation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Mantra. Like the milk of lioness, nobody except a worthy candidate can assimilate the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If initiation is bestowed upon an unworthy person without thinking, it will rebound and will destroy the very bestower.

Hence the Guru should bestow initiation with devout sentiment of doing good of himself and of his disciple. If he initiates by holding such pure and holy sentiments, he does not succumb to sins. But if he bestows initiation only to thicken the number of disciples, or to amass wealth under temptation, or without thinking worth or worthlessness of the disciple, he is doing the job or selling the name of Bhagavān and thereby he turns a heinous offender. Heaping censures upon such willful persons rolling amidst wealth and worldly pleasures in Brahmavaivarta puran, the Goddess Earth says to Brahmā:

I am distressed by the unbearable burden of those who sell the auspicious name of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa (by Dhādhī-līlā, Kīrtan-bheta, Mālā uchāmaṇī, Bhāgavat, bestowing initiation etc, etc.).

Bhagavān too, says to Śrī Nandarayji:

The Brahmin who sells my name can't remember my name while dying. He keeps moving in the endless regress of birth and death.

This explains that a disciple should be a person who receives initiation because he wishes to follow doctrines of Puṣṭimārga. He should not be a fraudulent and hypocritical person who is satisfied only with receiving initiation and is no more interested in following the doctrines of Puṣṭimārga.

Guru's having a fraudulent disciple is in itself an exhibition of his unworthy-ness and carelessness towards his sect. When the patient who consults a doctor does not recover from illness, he finds fault with the doctor and blames him as an inefficient, careless and unworthy doctor. Similarly, the guru whose disciples do not behave according to the doctrine and who are unworthy and fraudulent, proves his own inefficiency, carelessness, disloyalty to Saṁpradāya and anti-doctrinal conduct.

Essence :

The follower of Puṣṭimārga :

- Must be chosen as 'Puṣṭi' being i.e. of the divine by Bhagavān
- Must be committed to obey principles of the sect and inquisitive to know at least that which is of his concern.
- Must remain ever ready to carry out his duties.

3. Deyavastu i.e. Dīkṣā-mantra :

There are two types of initiations: Initiation of Śaraṇa (surrender) and initiation of Samarpaṇa (Dedication). Initiation of Śaraṇa is given to the being who of course loves to live his life by devoting himself to Bhagavān's service and remembrance but for some reasons is not in the position to do so in spite of his desire. Whereas, initiation of Samarpaṇa Mantra (Brahmasambandha) is given only to that person who is fully prepared to perform service of Bhagavān at his home.

For example, when marriageable boy and girl choose each other as life partners, their betrothal is settled. And when they are prepared to live their conjugal life and ready to shoulder the responsibility as householders, they are united in wedlock. Similarly, Śaraṇa Dīkṣā is the betrothal ceremony of Bhagavān and the being, whereas Samarpaṇa Dīkṣā is the marriage ceremony. It should be taken for granted that just as bride who does not go to his husband's home after marriage is given up by her husband, similarly, initiation

is revoked if one does not do service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa even after taking initiation of Samarpaṇa. It must be noted that such disloyal and faithless person is forsaken by Bhagavān. Can a being who has been accepted by Bhagavān remains without performing Bhagavān's service?

Origin of Mantra :

When the war was about to take place on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra between Kauravas and Pāṇdavas, all of a sudden, Arjuna falls into the worrying state of dilemma: whether he should fight a war or not. At that time what ŚrīKṛṣṇa said him is known as 'Bhagavad-gītā'. There was an exchange of a series of questions and answers between Arjuna and Krishna. Arjuna went on putting questions after questions and ŚrīKṛṣṇa went on answering his doubts and quarries. But when Arjuna in his confused state could not reach to any decision Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa, ultimately, ordered him to come to his surrender. This is the very essence called from the whole Gītā and Scripture. Thus says Bhagavān :

Listen to my instruction, which is the most secret among all instruction given so far to anybody. This is my supreme instruction. As you are extremely dear to me, I say these words that are beneficial to you.

And then follows Bhagavān's instruction the most secret among the mysterious ones :

³maṇ manā bhava mad-bhakto
mad-yājī mām namaskuru
māmeva-iṣyasi satyaṁ te
pratijāne priyo'si me

Meaning: Arjuna! Fix your mind in me and be my dear devotee. Perform my worship and always bow to me. As you are extremely dear to me, I promise you that by doing so you will surely obtain me and only me and therefore my dear—

⁴Sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām-ekam śaraṇam vraja
ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpēbhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śuca

Meaning: (Such as those that are obstructive in coming to my surrender) giving up all Dharmas, come only to my refuge. I shall protect you from all sins (i.e. from all sins that are likely to create obstructs in your way to come to my surrender) hence, be free from worries.

The ordinance of surrender to Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa, which is the very essence of the Gītā, is the seed of the initiation of Śaraṇa-mantra.

Samarpaṇa Mantra (Mantra of dedication) :

It was the mission of ŚrīVallabhācārya to turn Puṣṭi-beings to Bhagavān's service. For this purpose it was necessary first to introduce Puṣṭi-beings to Bhagavān. So, one day

ŚrīVallabhācārya was thinking about the way as to how to do that. When ŚrīVallabhācārya was lost in these thoughts, the ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself manifested before him. He gave him the Mantra of Śraṇa and Samarpaṇa Dīkṣā. Together with it, he also communicated to ŚrīVallabhācārya about do's and don'ts of Puṣṭi devotees. ŚrīVallabhācārya has complied such instructions of Bhagavān in the very words of Bhagavān and has presented it in his treatise, 'Siddhānta-rahasya' for the benefit of Puṣṭi beings.

Recitation of Mantra :

Recitation of initiation Mantra is very important part of the devotional life. After taking bath and putting fresh clothes one should sit on Āsana at peaceful and suitable place. By taking up in right hand the recital rosary of Tulasī wood one should pronounce the Mantra once on every bead. Dīkṣā Mantra should be recited in slow tone so as no other person can hear it. While reciting Mantra, the devotee should keep before him the beautiful portrait of his favourite Bhagavān and should keep on beholding his deity during the recital. This helps in concentrating mind. Moreover, it is necessary to meditate upon the meaning of the Mantra. Dīkṣā Mantra cannot be recited in any the state of walking, talking or working etc.

4. The place of Initiation :

The place of initiation must be sacred. Therefore, initiation of Samarpaṇa is given before the deity, generally before

Guru's deity. What other place can be holier than the one where Bhagavān himself is present! It is necessary to have such rule as regards the place of Initiation of Śraṇa.

5. The time of Initiation :

When a disciple is fully prepared to adopt the devotional course of Puṣṭi, that time should be considered as the most appropriate time for initiation. So, Guru should grant initiation of Surrender when the disciple is interested in performing Bhagavān's service in the way Puṣṭimārga teaches, abandons resort to all gods and goddesses other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa and realizes ŚrīKṛṣṇa as his all-in-all and becomes ready to put into action his duties such as—**a.** to obtain the knowledge of ŚrīVallabhācārya. **b.** to obtain knowledge of doctrines of his sect. **c.** to hold signs and symbols of a Vaisnava **d.** to recite verse and texts of tenets like Śodaśa-grantha, Tatvārtha-dīpa-nibandha etc., praise of Ācāryas & ŚrīKṛṣṇa like ŚrīKṛṣṇaṣṭakam, Sarvottama-stotram etc.

Similarly, while carrying out duties of the path of surrender, when a devotee wishes to pass his life as a humble servant of ŚrīKṛṣṇa and is ready to perform service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, then only he should be allowed to have initiation of Samarpaṇa.

6. Process & sentiment of initiation :

a. Process :

Through the initiation of surrender the being is linked with Bhagavān with a tie of betrothal and through the Initiation

of dedication, the being is wedded to Bhagavān. It is, therefore, quite necessary to maintain the sanctity of the process and the purity of the body and mind of the receiver and bestower of the ceremonies of such divine initiation. For this reason, before the initiation of dedication, the candidate is required to take bath and observe fast as a rule for obtaining purity of the body and senses. The purpose that lies behind all this is to teach serenity and sanctity of the initiation and to purify his mind to befit to initiation. Unfortunately, since long, no such care is taken with the initiation of Surrender. However, if some process like this is adopted regarding initiation of Śaraṇa Mantra, there is nothing wrong in it.

b. Sentiment :

By the grace of ŚrīVallabhācārya his descendents have inherited significant but difficult responsibility of giving initiation. Hence, it becomes the sacred duty of the descendents of ŚrīVallabha dynasty to shoulder this responsibility in a proper way. It is apparent that none but ŚrīVallabhācārya can be endowed with all the characteristics of an ideal Guru, prescribed by ŚrīVallabhācārya himself. However, his descendents should put forth utmost and honest efforts to develop and accustom to the characteristics of a Guru, prescribed by ŚrīVallabhācārya and should take precaution not to override the prescribed limits of the doctrines of the sect while bestowing initiation. The guru should hold in his heart the sentiment of utter humility that “gracious ŚrīVallabhācārya will bring about the relation of the being with Bhagavān and he is only performing

the duty of a mediator to conduit the being onward to ŚrīVallabhācārya”. This is why the descendents of ŚrīVallabhācārya are called ‘Guru-dvāra’ viz. the door that leads to the great Guru. Therefore, the preceptor who imparts to his disciple proper learning of the personality, value, commandments and doctrines of ŚrīVallabhācārya can be called ‘Guru-dvāra’ in the real sense of the term. Contrary to this, the descendent of ŚrīVallabhācārya, who gives instruction to his disciples by twisting the doctrines of ŚrīVallabhācārya to serve his own selfish motives should be known as deceiver and an imposter but not ‘Guru-dvāra’ in the least.

The guru should not entertain any kind of selfish sentiments but he should illumine his heart with noble sentiment of the upliftment of his disciples. Similarly, the disciple, too should receive initiation by holding sentiments of purity, holiness and reverence, thinking that “it is my fortune that I have entered into the sect of so great Guru like ŚrīVallabhācārya. I shall be blessed to obtain refuge in Bhagavān and will be eligible to do his service. This initiation will enable me to make my life fruitful by the service and remembrance of Bhavan”. Initiation will serve no purpose to him if he is led by selfish motives in receiving it. He should not be influenced to become a disciple of Puṣṭi-bhakti-saṁpradāya by seeing the thick number of disciples in his region; or by entertaining selfish motives to prosper in his business; or to wash his sins; or to filing Zārījī in holy seats (Baithakajī) etc.

Why doesn't Dīkṣā show its impact :

A patient visiting the doctor for medical treatment is seen recovering from illness within a very short time. A thin and lean man, attending gymkhana is seen turning into a strong and sturdy man. A dull and blockheaded child attending a school, become a clever boy within short time. Everybody can see, as mentioned before, very clearly the change that comes in man due to medical treatment, exercise and education. But, very often, it does not happen in the field of religion.

It is a matter of surprise that most of the people who have obtained the initiation of Surrender (Aṣṭākṣar Dīkṣā) or Brahma-sambhand Dīkṣā, do not undergo bit of change even after receiving such an excellent initiation!!! Not only this, but there are some so-called disciples of Puṣṭi sect who seem, after receiving initiation, to develop vices (Pride of being 'Parama Bhagavadīya' etc.), which were absent in them before receiving initiation. Why does it happen so?

If it is thought seriously, it can be understood that this is the result of continuing carelessness towards the method of initiation along with all its six facets that are discussed earlier. If the method of initiation, which has been prescribed in scriptures and Saṁpradaya, is not properly observed at the time of giving and receiving it, such donation turns out to be fruitless. So, the sages like Gautama and Nārada have considered certain donations as improper donation or dishonest donations.

- Donation that is given in childhood or immature age.
- Donation that is given foolishly.
- Donation that is given in the state of intoxication or madness
- Donation that is given out of greed or in return of gratitude.
- Donation that is given in fun
- Donation that is given under deception
- Donation of a thing (e.g. Mantra) for which the bestower is not eligible.
- Donation given to an unworthy person.

All the above kinds of donation have been considered as improper or dishonest donation. The donation given in any of the above ways or situations is to be treated as good for nothing. Hence, all the above kinds of donation are considered as fruitless. These rules are also applicable in the matter of Initiation. If modern disciples are seen in the light of these scriptural remarks, it can easily be understood why no change is discernible in their life even after receiving valuable initiation of the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

1. Man who is devoted to the service of Kṛṣṇa,
Void of hypocrisy who is
Who knows the essence of Bhāgavat
be respectfully made a Guru.

2. Always thinking properly be given
Specially the name of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa
In case it's a thoughtless donation
The bestower himself will be undone.
3. Hold your mind in me, be my devotee
worship me, bow to me,
you will obtain me hereby, I promise you,
as you are extremely dear to me.
4. Leaving all Dharmas aside,
only to my refuge come
Be sure, from all sins I shall
protect you. Have no worry.

Books for further reading :

Satsiddhānta-mārtaṇḍa, by Śrī Gaṅṅulālājī.
Comm. by Śrī Puruṣottamājī on Siddhānta-rahasya.
Puṣṭibhakti-adhikār-viveka in Prameya-ratnārṇava, by Śrī La-
lūbhatajī
Siddhānta-muktāvalī
Bhagavad Gītā, Chapter 18
Svamārgīya-śaraṇa-samarpaṇa-sevādi-nirūpaṇam, Ver. 49-58
by Śrī Harirāyājī
Jalbhedā by Śrī Vallabhācārya and its comm. by Śrī Puruṣotta-
mājī

Life full of Śrī Kṛṣṇa - Service

Enshrining Śrī Kṛṣṇa deity in home and dedicating oneself lovingly to Him along with one's house, wealth, family etc and attaching ones mind in Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called 'service'.

Variation in devotion by variation of sentiment :

Preceded by the knowledge of His magnanimity (Māhātmya-jñāna), having firm (Sudṛḍha) and uppermost (Sarvato'dhika) affection (Sneha) in Bhagavān is called 'devotion'. On account of various powers and sports of Bhagavān, the magnanimity of Bhagavān has been narrated differently at different places in scriptures. Because of differences in their nature and test, different beings develop different kinds of sentiments after knowing magnanimity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As a result of this, they are led to perform Bhagavān's worship with different kinds of expectations.

Devotion for wealth :

Bhagavān is omnipotent, the master ruler and bestower of fruit. Knowing such attributes of Bhagavān, some greedy people are led toward Bhagavān's devotion to obtain wealth and affluence. In the Gītā, Bhagavān labels such devotees as 'Arthārthī'. Artha = wealth + Arthi = desirous, desirous to obtain wealth through Bhagavān's devotion.

Devotion to ease pain :

Those who have realized that worldly joys and sorrows are painful and think that only Bhagavān can relieve them from the miseries of worldly life. Such people also turn to devotion of Bhagavān. In the Gītā, such people are called as 'Ārta-bhakta' i.e. afflicted, unhappy devotees.

Devotion for knowledge :

Those who have obtained a little knowledge of the supreme self are curious to know him perfectly. Such people also contain desire to obtain liberation through the path of knowledge. They are called 'Jijñāsu-bhakta' in Gītā.

Devotion of the learned :

Some seekers who have already obtained perfect knowledge of the Supreme Self turn to devotion of Bhagavān with desire to merge their own self in the universal self of Brahma. Out of such knowledgeable seekers, some devotees turn to devotion of Bhagavān, thinking that none but Bhagavān is worthy of worship. Such devotees are called 'Learned Devotees' in the Gītā.

Arthārthī, Ārta and Jijñāsu -types of beings do perform worship of Bhagavān, but their devotion is rather more self-oriented. It is performed with the desire to obtain their own object and not to add to the happiness of Bhagavān. Hence, their devotion aims at attainment of their own interest; it is devotion with desire (Sakāma). If there is least smell

of self-centeredness in devotion, devotion gets distorted. Devotion with worldly desire is condemned by Bhagavān.

Nirguṇa-puṣṭi-bhakta :

When we come into contact with learned person, we expect different behavior from him. Whereas, our expectations change when we face any illiterate person. Thus, our expectations differ from person to person. Similarly, expectations of Bhagavān also varies with reference to the background being comes to Him. For example, Bhagavān expects that the being must be free from every kind of worldly and otherworldly desires, at least from his devotion, when he comes through the devotional path of Puṣṭi, propounded by ŚrīVallabhācārya. Therefore, Bhagavān does not accept devotion that is performed with any kind of abovementioned desires in the devotional path of Puṣṭi. Hence, if devotion is performed with purity in mind and without any desire worldly -other worldly fruit or even liberation, only such devotion is accepted by Bhagavān in the devotional path of Puṣṭi. Therefore, the devotees who perform such pure minded devotion are considered by Bhagavān as the best devotees. Extolling the sentiment of a Puṣṭi-devotee in Bhāgavat, Bhagavān says :

My (Puṣṭi) devotees who constantly perform my worship without entertaining any sort of desire (through devotion), do not accept even liberation in return of my worship.

A true devotee of Bhagavān considers liberation just a worthless & insignificant thing in comparison with Bhagavān's worship, as the life of a devotee is solely devoted to the service of Bhagavān. That is why Bhagavān himself accepts the superiority of such devotees. Śrī Vallabhācārya ordains the followers of Puṣṭi to perform Bhagavān's worship only for the sake of His delight.

Kṛṣṇa-seva sadā Kāryā

Meaning: Service of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa should be performed necessarily for ever.

Service is Necessity, not duty:

According to Śrī Vallabhācārya, service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not a duty but it is a requirement. It is an inevitable necessity. Words like 'duty' and 'obligation' fall short in evaluating service. Instincts like eating and breathing are natural among animals to sustain their life. These activities are inborn in them. A living being needs no instruction as to the acts of eating or breathing. Similarly, service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a necessity of Puṣṭi-beings. Śrī Vallabhācārya says the very existence of a follower of Puṣṭi-devotion is meaningless without Śrī Kṛṣṇa's service. Here, a question arises: if Śrī Kṛṣṇa's service is necessity, why don't Puṣṭi-beings become automatically aware of their necessity today?

Why is necessity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa service not experienced?

Scriptures say that every animate creature and inanimate

object can be analyzed in three phases. Therefore, in the case of human being, such phases can be understood thus:

1. Ādhi-bhautika = Physical, external phase; regarding the body.
2. Ādhyātmika = Spiritual, internal phase; regarding mind, intellect, chitta, Ahankāra and other senses.
3. Ādhi-daivika = Divine, the inmost phase; regarding the individual soul.

The physical life is the most external phase of human life. However, it is highly influential. In comparison with the physical life, spiritual life is an internal phase. The rise of Ādhi-bhautika phase suppresses spiritual phase in human being. The divine phase is the inner most phase of human life. Under the impact of Ādhi-bhautika phase divine phase also gets suppressed. Corresponding to these three phases, there are three instincts that reside in every human being:

1. Physical instinctual urge: air, food, water, sleep etc.
2. Spiritual impulse: satisfaction, mercy, tolerance etc and good conduct as per religious scriptures.
3. Divine impulse: devotion of Bhagavān.

Devotion of Bhagavān is a divine impulse of a human being. Upsurge of the instinctual urge decreases intensity of the divine impulse of devotion. It remains concealed in the human soul and can't have an outlet. This is the reason

why every Puṣṭi being can't experience this necessity. This point requires more clarification.

Physical needs :

Food, water, air etc are our bodily needs. A healthy man needs food after every 6 to 8 hours. But when he falls ill, his appetite is lessened. Gradually he loses weight. When doctor advises him to take enough food he complains of the loss of appetite. This makes clear that even though a sick man may have no liking for food, his body does need enough food. But as soon as he begins to recover from illness, his appetite also starts increasing. Same thing is experienced regarding devotion of Bhagavān. Need is already there but it is not felt.

Spiritual needs :

Satisfaction, mercy, tolerance, purity, control over senses, non-stealing, truth, having no anger, honesty etc. and scriptural conducts are also human needs. These needs are also called spiritual needs. When a man keeps only a Bhautik outlook, when he becomes extremely selfish, the abovementioned spiritual attributes and scriptural conducts are replaced by beastly vices like lust, anger, greed, ignorance, pride, jealousy etc. His behavior becomes un-controlled. The man who holds such vices may feel himself happy for some time but he constantly remains disturbed and tense. When such person faces a man far advanced in vices and wanton-ness, his ego is wounded. Sometimes, when he is criticized and censured

by the society for his vices, he becomes conscious of his heart's disquiet on account of vices inherent in him. He understands the evil effect of material and beastly tendencies. Only at this time he experiences the need of moral qualities like mercy, truth, honesty and scriptural merit of good-conduct. As man begins to give up evil tendencies like lust, derive, anger etc, the attributes of faith, morality and good-conduct begin to increase in him. Morality and good conduct add peace and purity to his mind and senses. Same thing happens in the matter of devotion.

Divine needs :

Devotion of Bhagavān is the divine need of a being. As children are naturally attracted to their parents, similarly a being, the Aṁśa of Bhagavān as he is, has natural and spontaneous attraction towards Bhagavān. But like a child who remains engrossed in games and forgets its parents in spite of its intimate relation with parents the being too, forgets Bhagavān because of his worldly attachment and ignorance. But Bhagavān's devotion is the bare necessity—the foremost need of a being. How much a child might be lost in game, however at the end it will run to its parents. Similarly, a being may remain engrossed in the game of worldly-other worldly pleasures but finally he goes to take refuge in Bhagavān. The happiness that a child feels in its mother's lap and peace and safety it enjoys under the protection of its father can be found nowhere in the world. Similarly, the being can have unblended happiness nowhere but in the devotion

of Bhagavān. A being can have the fulfilment of his divine need only by the devotion of Bhagavān. For this reason, the struggle of people for happiness does not come to an end, they go on forever. As soon as desire for one object is satisfied it is followed by another desire and thus desires go on multiplying. Thus, numerous births pass in finding more and more pleasure. But who can explain to these strugglers that what they really need is the perfect bliss that lies in Bhagavān. It can be obtained only through the devotion of Bhagavān. That is why, even-though the beings obtain the highest worldly happiness, they are not satisfied with it. The great dissatisfaction ruins their life but they do not realize their real divine need. The reason lies in their sentiments of I-ness and my-ness and in their ignorance. So such beings wander here and there, struggling to find happiness. It is about such beings that Śrī Vallabhācārya writes in his 'Subodhinī' commentary on Bhāgavat Purāṇa :

*¹ Guptānandaḥ yato jīvāḥ
nirānandaṁ jagad yataḥ
pūrṇānando haris tasmāt
sevyāḥ sarvaiḥ sukhārthibhiḥ.*

Meaning: Bliss remains concealed in beings. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has created the universe and beings out of his own divine self but Bhagavān has concealed his attribute of Bliss in beings and has made the universe totally void of the attributes of bliss and consciousness. Hence, the perfect bliss can nowhere be found except in Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Ignorant of this, beings are struggling to find bliss from one another or from worldly objects that are utterly void of bliss. They are blinded by ignorance and illusion. As one cannot quench his thirst with water-like desert-sand, one who wanders in search of bliss, can't find real bliss anywhere in this world. (The bliss that is obtained from worldly objects results in pain, as it is not bliss in the real sense. This is discussed in the previous chapter Page No.75) So the people who want to obtain perfect-divine bliss, should worship own Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. When one obtains this type of knowledge from the preceptor like Śrī Vallabhācārya or from the divine scripture one can know what his real need is and how to fulfil it. Thus, we have seen that Bhagavān's worship is not duty but it is a natural need or necessity. It is the very nature of a Puṣṭi-being.

Bhagavān's worship is, sometimes, referred to as a duty, dharma or responsibility. It is said so purposefully so that beings who have deviated from Bhagavān under the influence of ignorance, may again be led to Bhagavān's worship. 'Kartavya' loosely means ought, duty or obligation. But it really means: what is worth-doing. What else can be worth-doing for a Puṣṭi being? -in this sense the word 'Kartavya' has been used here. When the being begins to perform Bhagavān's worship Bhagavān too, though he is absolutely perfect, longs to love such natural love and affection of the being. Expressing this sentiment, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā:

Ye yathā mām prapadyante tathā tathaiva bhajāmyaham

Meaning: I, too, worship (accept) my devotee just in the same manner in which he worships me.

How to awaken such sentiment :

Ultimately, it is His grace that determines the move of the being. However, those who are blessed by Bhagavān, must do some effort also to cultivate that grace. That is called Līlā. To facilitate poor players of Līlā, scripture gives valuable guidance as under, by following which beings can go nearer to Bhagavān.

1. Comprehensive knowledge of Bhagavān,
2. Knowledge of self and
3. Knowledge of the relationship between Bhagavān and being

These three are three chief means to awaken devotional sentiment in the heart of the blessed beings. In order to achieve above knowledge, one should seek company of the devotees and preceptors of the sect. The seeker should devote himself to the study of Bhagavad Gītā, Bhāgavat Purāna and other scriptures through their help.

Knowledge of Bhagavān :

ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the Father of the Universe. He is the origin of all the animate beings and inanimate objects. ŚrīKṛṣṇa looks after the nourishment of all beings. Nothing can happen

in this world without his will. Gods, demons, human beings as well as insentient things are, for Bhagavān, mere toys to play with. This Svarūpa of Bhagavān should be meditated good-company and the study of devotional scriptures. One should think that Bhagavān has made this world for his own bliss, sport and play, and a being is a mere toy, an instrument for Bhagavān's play. The player can enjoy the game if the instruments of the game are suitable for the game. Similarly, the beings too, should remain devoted to Bhagavān for his pleasure. One should keep deep faith, discrimination and patience in Bhagavān as shown by ŚrīVallabhācārya in his treatise, 'Viveka-dhairyaśraya'.

Knowledge of the self :

Bhagavān has created beings from his ownself. Hence, Bhagavān is like a father of beings and beings are like his children. Beings are, therefore, called 'aṁśa' i.e particles of Bhagavān. Separated from Bhagavān and wrapped by ignorance these beings have lost the knowledge of Bhagavān, the knowledge of their ownself, of their relation with Bhagavān and of their duties. Consequently, beings are engaged in 'I' and 'My' and have fallen down from their sacred duty of performing Bhagavān's service. In order to recover from such worldly situation, beings should obtain the knowledge of their ownself through good company and through the study of devotional scriptures and think that: Just as parents take loving care of their children, they bring up and nourish them and make them self-supporting. Loving Bhagavān too,

has endowed beings with senses of knowledge like eyes, nose etc., senses of action like hands, legs etc., and mind and intellect and has made them self-reliant. As when children grow up and become self-reliant, they take care of their parents and serve them with love and gratitude. Similarly, it is the foremost duty of a being to perform service of Bhagavān with whatever devout sentiment he may have in his mind towards the supreme father.

Knowledge of relation :

One can obtain the knowledge of Bhagavān, knowledge of the being and the relation between them as Amśa-Amśī (Father-sun) through the devotees of Bhagavān and through the study of devotional scriptures. Service and dedication are like two sides of a coin. Hence, sentiment of dedication is considered as the seed of the sentiment of service. Hence, before taking up the topic of service, we shall consider the concept of dedication in Puṣṭi-bhakti sect.

-
1. Void of bliss as beings are
bliss-less therefore is the world,
the perfect bliss, only Hari
be served by all those that happiness want.

Samarpaṇa

Dedication = Entrustment:

Śrī Vallabhācārya says in Siddhānta-rahasya:

Nivedibhiḥ samarpyaiva sarvaṁ kuryād iti sthitiḥ

Meaning: The firm rule is that those who are dedicated to ŚrīKṛṣṇa (through the initiation of Brahma-sambandha) should first offer every thing to ŚrīKṛṣṇa and only after that should act.

This commandment is actually given by ŚrīKṛṣṇa to the devotee of the devotional path of Puṣṭi through Śrī Vallabhācārya to which he presented in the form of verse: 'Siddhānta-rahasya'.

What is meant by 'dedication'? It means entrusting. When one entrusts all his belonging to ŚrīKṛṣṇa with the sentiment that whatever he possesses, basically belongs to the Lord of world ŚrīKṛṣṇa, it is called dedication. It has been said in ŚrīBhāgavat:

ŚrīKṛṣṇa has made this world for his play.

Wicked people in this world behave in such a way as if they own everything.

This statement says that, in fact, whatever is there in this world, belongs to ŚrīKṛṣṇa and everything is for ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Hence, in the Gītā ŚrīKṛṣṇa says :

*Yat-karoṣi yad-aśnasi
yaj-juhosi dadāsi yat;
yat-tapasyasi kaunteya
tat-kuraṣva madarpaṇam.*

Meaning: Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever rites you perform, whatever you donate, whatever penance (Tapa) you perform, O Arjuna! dedicate all to me.

The underlying idea of ŚrīKṛṣṇa's commanding words is that ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the real owner of all objects that we have with us. If one wants to use those objects, first he should employ them in service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. In place of this, if one takes in his use the objects that are to be used in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, he will be called a thief just as a servant who uses his master's owning for his own use before using them in his master's service or without taking his permission. That being may not commit such a heinous sin, gracious ŚrīVallabhācārya has shown the way of ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service through 'Ātma-nivedana'(self-declaration) and 'Ātma-samarpaṇa'(self-dedication).

Dedication = Measurement of affection :

A man's affection for another person can be evaluated by his volume of dedication to that person. Parents dedicate

everything, wealth, time, strength etc. for the well-being and prosperity of their children. A bride leaves her father, mother and home and dedicates her body, mind, wealth and everything to her husband. A student devotes his time-energy and relinquishes sports and game, pleasures and pastimes for the learning. We can see in these illustrations the affection of a father for his children the love of a woman for her husband and commitment of a student for achieving learning. We can also see in these examples that each one is sacrificing many things for the sake of their firm favourite i.e. children, husband or learning. Hence, we can easily say that dedication is the measurement of affection.

The devotional path of Puṣṭi is a path that unites the individual self with the supreme self. When a person dedicates everything to ŚrīKṛṣṇa, he does not do so out of fear of God or by dazzling from the splendor of ŚrīKṛṣṇa or for the want of something like a beggar. When a being realizes his relation with ŚrīKṛṣṇa, he dedicates all that belongs to him just as a child, separated from its parents for a long time, runs to embrace them at sight. This is the chief sentiment that lies behind the dedication.

Nivedana & Samprpaṇa (Declaration & Dedication) :

'Nivedana' means to make declaration; 'Ātma-nivedana' means to make declaration before ŚrīKṛṣṇa that along with oneself, home, family, wealth, body whatever one has in this world and in the other world belong to ŚrīKṛṣṇa and

is only for the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

“O ŚrīKṛṣṇa! Victimized by ignorance, I had forgotten that I am your own Aṁśa (part) and you are my Lord. You are the real owner of entire world. And, therefore, you are the sole owner of all objects that I have with me. However, evil-minded as I was, uptill now, I had been using them as my own. But, now, I have realized the truth. Hence, I resolve to dedicate in your service my own self as well as all objects I have with me”.

Holding such sentiment in mind, when the being receives initiation of Brahma-sambandha before ŚrīKṛṣṇa, it can be said that he has made Self Declaration.

Self-declaration is an oral dedication. It is an avowal taken of dedicating all in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa that one possesses. Whereas ‘dedication’ means to keep an oath taken before ŚrīKṛṣṇa, to turn oral dedication into practice. It means that one should employ one’s body, home, wealth and family in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Initiation of ‘Ātma-nivedana’ is granted for the dedication viz. it is granted to obtain eligibility to perform ŚrīKṛṣṇa’s service through body and wealth. So after receiving initiation of Ātma-nivedana if one does not dedicate viz. does not do ŚrīKṛṣṇa’s service, his initiation must be considered pretentious.

Difference Between Declaration, Dedication and Donation :

Worship involves three phenomenon :

1. Nivedana (declaration)
2. Samarpana (dedication)
3. Dāna (donation/gift)

As seen in the previous paragraph, one does not donate his own self and objects through self-declaration or self-dedication. When donation is made, the donator withdraws his ownership from the objects and transfers them to the receiver. This is not the case with Nivedana and Samarpana. In declaration and dedication one’s physical ownership is not withdrawn from the object. What is given up is only the pride of being its owner, remembering that ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the real and divine owner of all the things. Therefore, the sentiment that works behind them is that, from Ādhi-daivika viewpoint i.e. from the point of view of the creation of Līlā, ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the divine owner of the entire universe. And whatever man possesses is endowed by God for the sake of His Līlā. Therefore, ownership of the man over his belonging is from the Ādhi-bhautika (external) point of view only. Thus, when nothing belongs to man here (from Ādhi-daivika viewpoint), and every thing belongs to ŚrīKṛṣṇa only, how can one donate anything to ŚrīKṛṣṇa? Normally, it does not happen. But many times it is seen that a family servant, who does not have anything his own and everything belongs to his master, inspite of that presents gift to his

master family on some occasion. Similarly, devotees also many times present gifts in the form of cash and kind (Bheṅta-Sāmagrī) to deity, mostly in Haveli and temple. Such practice is not only contrary to the tenets of the sect, it does not fit in the definition of 'Samarpaṇa' also. Because, as per principle, Samarpaṇa must fulfil four conditions: 1. One's own deity 2. One's own wealth 3. One's own house and 4. One's own body. As against this, when gifts and food-stuff are given for the worship of others' deity i.e. for the deity of public temple or Havelis of Goswamis or else-where, such gifts are considered as donation (Dāna).

No propounder of Puṣṭimarga like ŚrīVallabhācārya, ŚrīGopīnātha-prabhucaraṇa and ŚrīViṭṭhlaṅtha-prabhucaraṇa or any other preceding preceptors have preached such practice in the sect. On the contrary, such practice has always been censured.

Samarpaṇa and Ananyatā (devotion in single deity):

When a person maintains his loyalty, faith, devotion and trust in none else but one deity, it is called one-pointed devotion (devotion in none-other, but one). Affection and dedication can't be obtained without one-pointed devotion. Explaining Ananya devotion in the Gītā, ŚrīKṛṣṇa says:

Those who worship me with their mind fully attached to me by dedicating all their actions to me, by becoming devoted to me

and by meditating upon me with one-pointed concentration, are uplifted by me from the worldly ocean of birth and death within very short time, and therefore, attach your mind and intellect only in me. By doing so, you will always remain in me. Entertain no doubt.

Children are very fond of plays and games. Very often they give up eating for the sake of games. There are examples of such lovers of art who have given up their home and hearth, their family and friends for the sake of their love for art. Everyone can easily experience the sacrifice of happiness and comforts the parents make out of affection for the well-being and happiness of their children. Patriots do not hesitate in sacrificing their home, their family and even their own life for the sake of their country. All these illustrations point out one thing that where there is such affection or dedication, one-pointed devotedness i.e. Ananyatā also remains there.

Ananyatā:

Explaining Ananya devotedness ŚrīVallabhācārya says in his treatise 'Bhaktivardhinī':

"Love of Hari destroys all other longings, and when a devotee develops passionate attachment for ŚrīKṛṣṇa brings distaste for one's home-life. One begins to see the very members of one's family as obstacles, do not appear

to be one's Self. And when one becomes obsessed with ŚrīKṛṣṇa one has undoubtedly attained one's goal".

Such type of one-pointed devoted-ness is possible only when the devotee reaches to high level of devotion for ŚrīKṛṣṇa. But the things a Puṣṭi devotee has to give up in the minimum at the elementary stage of devotion are as under :

1. Anyāśraya : Resort in gods and goddesses other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa
2. Asamarpita bhoga : Taking in use what is not dedicated
3. Asad ālāpa-kriyā-vicāra : Talking, doing and thinking what is evil
4. Duḥsaṅga : Bad-company.

Anyāśraya-tyāga :

Resort in gods and goddesses other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa is discussed in detail in earlier chapter.

Abandonment of Asamarpita :

That object which is not used directly or indirectly in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is called 'Asamarpita' (undedicated) in the devotional path of Puṣṭi. After taking initiation of Brahma-sambandha it is indispensable to stop consumption of un-dedicated objects. In treatise 'Siddhānta-rahasya' ŚrīVallabhācārya clearly says :

Asamarpita-vastūnāṁ tasmād varjanam-ācaret

Meaning: Therefore, one must stop the consumption of the objects which have not been dedicated to Kṛṣṇa.

Abandonment of bad-company :

It is very possible that the disciple of Puṣṭi-bhakti-sampradāya may come into contact with the people following some different sect or anti/unreligious people. Sometimes, the company of such people or the company of some other people can affect the mind of Puṣṭi devotee. It is seen that in such devotees devotional sentiment weakens, enthusiasm in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa decreases, zeal for studying and understanding doctrines of the sect diminishes. The company of such people is worth giving up. Hence, Vallabhācārya says :

Asat-saṅgo na kartavyaḥ bhakti-mārgasya bādhaḥ

Meaning: Bad-company is detrimental to be the path of devotion. Hence, one should avoid the company of the bad persons.

Abandonment of bad talk-deed and thought :

It is very difficult to control one's mind. It is fickle and behaves in its own way. Hence, it is extremely difficult to issue a check upon evil thoughts. Therefore, it is suggested that if you cannot control yourself from inside, try to control from outside. Thus, one should control one's tongue.

We express our thoughts and ideas through conversation. Comparing to mind it is easier to issue control on tongue. Therefore, by controlling one's tongue one can restrain his

bad thoughts. Both bad thoughts and useless talk concern one's mind in having concentration in ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

To control one's deeds is as much necessary as to control one's speech. Hence, all the deeds which have no concern with ŚrīKṛṣṇa must be given up ŚrīVallabhācārya says:

Vṛthālāpa-kriyā-dhyānaṁ sarvathaiva parityajet

Meaning: Talks, deeds and thoughts which are not related to ŚrīKṛṣṇa are useless; a devotee should abandon them by all means.

If concentration is there, abandonment is easy:

A student who lacks natural interest for study has to be advised very often not to pay attention to sports and games and concentrate his mind on the study. But when a student is attached to study voluntarily, his addiction to sports & games, and T.V. & films takes leave of him spontaneously and he needs not to be hammered upon. Similarly, until the mind of devotee is naturally attached to ŚrīKṛṣṇa, his preceptor has to give him directions such as to give up 1. resort to anything other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa, 2. use of what is undedicated, 3. bad-company and 4. bad talk etc. Generally, the abandonment of all such matters takes place either through resolve or by following rules, but when one's mind is attached to ŚrīKṛṣṇa quite naturally, no extra efforts are needed to give up resort of other gods etc. Abandonment of all such matters takes place spontaneously.

Here one may ask: Why should one make efforts to give up resort in other gods and stop the use of un-dedicated if they are to exit from mind automatically with the entry of true devotion in mind? Such thought is self-destroying. For example, if a student thinks that all extracurricular activities will depart as soon as his mind is attached to study, so why should he bother to give up the same. Isn't this a foolish thought? A student who thinks so and follows such thought will not be able to attach his mind to study and detach it from other activities that are harmful to his study. Similarly, if any devotee does not give up resort to other gods and keeps waiting for the attachment of his mind to ŚrīKṛṣṇa, neither will he obtain attachment to ŚrīKṛṣṇa nor detachment from resort to other gods etc. His downfall is certain. Hence, those who desire to obtain devotion to ŚrīKṛṣṇa should abandon resort in other gods at the very outset.

Further Reading:

Siddhāntarahasya

Navaratnam

Bhagavad Gītā

Duḥsaṅga-vijñāna-nirūpanam & Śikṣāpatra of ŚrīHarirāyaṅī

ŚrīKṛṣṇa Service

Why ŚrīKṛṣṇa service ?

Scriptures show several courses such as donation, fasts, austerity, Japa, pilgrimage, renunciation, knowledge, action etc. are prescribed for the end of worldly suffering and achieving divine bliss. Despite so many scriptural courses predominance is given to the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa in the devotional path of Puṣṭi. Why ?

For the solution of above question we shall refer to the dialogue between ŚrīKṛṣṇa and Uddhavaḥ shown in Bhāgavat Purāṇa. ŚrīKṛṣṇa says :

Scriptural means like Yoga, knowledge, renunciation, austerity and study of Vedas are not as powerful as devotion in obtaining me. As, the only mean to obtain me is one-pointed devotion to me (service with love).

The root of the word 'Bhakti' is 'Bhaj' of the Sanskrit language. It means : to serve. Hence, 'Bhakti' means ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service performed with love and knowledge of the greatness of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. If the abovementioned statement of Bhāgavata Purāṇa is considered, it will be clear why ŚrīKṛṣṇa service has been considered as the best among all courses in Puṣṭi-bhakti-sampradāya. Puṣṭi-bhakti-sampradāya has preferred

what is preferable to ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

The chief goal of Puṣṭi-bhakti sect is the reunification of two natural allies, Puṣṭi being and ŚrīKṛṣṇa, through Bhakti (devotion) on the part of Puṣṭi being and Puṣṭi (grace) on the part of ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

Service and Dedication is the necessity of relation :

When one person begins to love another person, he always longs for the proximity with one whom he loves. The mode of proximity and the type of course adopted to achieve such proximity depends upon the kind of relation two allies have. Mother - child, Guru - disciple, friends, Husband - wife etc. are some examples of such affection. Mother loves her kid. Guru loves his disciple. Friend loves his friend and husband loves his wife and vis-a-vis. Everybody longs for the proximity of its counterpart. However, as said earlier, the mode of proximity and the type of course adopted to achieve such proximity will be different. The important feature among every affectionate relation is the reflection of love in action. In the case of mother and child, the reflection of mother's love will be in the form of nurturing her child; in the case of Guru and disciple, the reflection of Guru's love will be in the form of careful right preaching; in the case of friends, the reflection of love could be in the form of companionship, favour, support etc. and so on. In short, love, whatever kind of it may be, demands some action as its exposition.

It may happen in some relations where two persons just keep good wishes for each other and do nothing. Such relations are called too formal and superficial. Can we imagine such a mother who, instead of nurturing her child, prefers only to recite the name of her son or who prefers to sit in the meditation of her son with her closed eyes? Doesn't it sound an abnormal behavior? Can such a mother be called affectionate? A mother having real affection in her child can never behave like that. Similarly, one who is a true affectionate devotee of ŚrīKṛṣṇa can never just sit and watch. He would wish to adopt such a course in which he can devote his mind, body and wealth in ŚrīKṛṣṇa to the maximum level. Therefore, he couldn't consider enough courses like reciting, austerity, pilgrimage, fast etc., leaving aside ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service.

Here, it is necessary to make a clarification. 'Bhakti' is another name for love. Soft feelings, which one develops for a worldly person, are described by words like 'love', 'affection' or 'attachment'. If anybody develops such feelings towards ŚrīKṛṣṇa, without any sort of selfishness, it is called 'devotion'.

Man cannot secure devotion for ŚrīKṛṣṇa by his own efforts. When ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself wishes to relish service of any being, devotion begins to take root in that being. Love expects complete dedication. So, ŚrīKṛṣṇa also expects complete dedication from his devotee. Expressing such sentiment at

the end of Gītā, ŚrīKṛṣṇa says to Arjuna :

*Sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyḥ śruṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
iṣṭo'si me drḍhamiti tato vakṣyāmi te hitaṁ
Man-manā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru
Māmevaiśyasi satyaṁ te prati-jāne priyo'si me*

Meaning: Listen O Arjuna! I tell you words that are the most mysterious among the mysterious. As you are extremely dear to me, I tell you what is good of you. String your mind in me, dedicate yourself to me, be my obedient servant. You are my beloved and so I tell you the truth that by doing so, you will surely obtain me.

Thus, ŚrīKṛṣṇa shows the way to approach Him: Dedication and Service with love and respect. Why so? If pondered upon the nature of ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service shown by Śrī Vallabhācārya, it is so characteristically and divinely devised that all scriptural means like knowledge action, Yoga, recital, renunciation, pilgrimage etc. form inclusion in ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service.

ŚrīKṛṣṇa service is all-inclusive:

Jñāna (knowledge): To obtain the knowledge of the divinity of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, his merits and Līlās that strengthens devotion in ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the only true knowledge for a devotee.

Meditation & Yoga: When a devotee performs ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service by attaching his mind in ŚrīKṛṣṇa, he

accomplishes meditation and yoga.

Japa (Recitation): During the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa and in ex-service time (Anavasara) singing, remembering and reciting the personality, merits, Līlā and names of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is true reciting for a devotee.

Tyāga (renunciation): Giving up the enjoyment of what is undedicated, resort in other gods and bad company is true renunciation for a devotee.

Tapa (Austerity): Control on bad tongue and behavior, accepting physical and mental suffering with the thought that God wishes so and forbearing divine pangs arising out of delay in obtaining fruits of devotion is the Tapa for a devotee.

Vṛta-Upavāsa (Fasts): Performing ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service, remembrance and singing by observing fast on the birth anniversary of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Nṛsiṃha and Vāmana; and on every Ekādaśī (Eleventh day) and giving up the enjoyment of undedicated objects throughout life are fasts for the devotee.

Prāyaścitta (Penitence): From the very beginning of the creation up to this time, a being might have to go through the cycles of innumerable births and deaths. After such long time he has got the knowledge of his duty of ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service. It will be a true penitence on the part of the being to make continuous effort to give up completely all such matters which may hinder him from the service and remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Thus, we have seen, how all courses such as action, meditation, yoga, reciting etc. are included in the worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. This too, is one of the reasons why worship is given a predominant place in the devotional path of Puṣṭi.

Purity of I-ness & My-ness only by service:

According to scriptures, Ahitā (I-ness) and Mamatā (my-ness) are the greatest obstructions in the obtainment of any achievement. Because of I-ness and My-ness man remains merged into worldly life. I-ness does not let man think about anything else except his own self, and makes him self-centred. My-ness makes him greedy, devoted to pleasures and intolerant. I-ness and My-ness give birth to vices such as lust, anger, greed, fatuity, intoxication, jealousy etc.

Ahaṅtā - I-ness:

I-ness is generally directed towards body. I-ness can be traced from the answer of the question "who am I". Man-woman, son-daughter, father-mother, disciple-preceptor, big-small, black-white, merchant-servant, educated-illiterate, rich-poor, Brāhmaṇa-Śūdra etc. can be its answers.

'I-ness' means: self-awareness. Self-awareness becomes vicious if it crosses its limit. The more conscious of I-ness a man is more entangled he becomes in himself. Such man does not realize due to over I-ness that I-ness, which makes him puffed and proud, is sustained on the bases of the material body, which is mortal. Hence, the hard labour he

under goes to sustain his I-ness, such as I-ness of being rich, being master etc. will remain no more, as soon as the soul departs from his body. Instead of nourishing and protecting I-ness that rests on the bases of mortal body, if man could nourish and concentrate his self which is the particle of supreme self ŚrīKṛṣṇa, it will help him in crossing the ocean of worldly life. All the efforts that are made for the sake of the body come to an end with the death of the body, while the efforts that are made for the well-being of the individual soul, remain with the soul for ever. Keeping this thing in view, ŚrīVallabhācārya has preached to make the use of the body, the resort of I-ness, in ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service. Dedication of body in to the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa by holding divine I-ness such as "I am the servant of ŚrīKṛṣṇa" will destroy the evilness of the worldly I-ness.

Mamatā-My-ness :

My-ness belongs to home, family, wealth etc. Objects of my-ness drag and drop men towards them so much that he could neither think about anything else nor could he do anything leaving them. Hence, home and family are compared with the vicious circle or dead end. My-ness causes a great hindrance in the upliftment of a man. But if the same family, home, wealth etc., which are subjects to my-ness, are united with ŚrīKṛṣṇa, instead of becoming obstructive, they will become useful in the devotion of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Therefore, ŚrīVallabhācārya has preached to employ house, family, wealth etc. in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

Thus, we can see how ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service converts the worst into the best. Initiation of Brahma-sambandha with the sentiment of self-dedication destroys worldly I-ness from the devotee. He now acquires divine I-ness: "I am the servant of ŚrīKṛṣṇa". Similarly, by employing house, family and wealth in the worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa worldly my-ness is destroyed and replaced by divine my-ness. With this, an approach of devotee changes towards his belongings. Now, instead of thinking 'everything is mine and for me' he begins to think: "everything belongs to ŚrīKṛṣṇa and is for ŚrīKṛṣṇa".

Divine I-ness and My-ness are as much helpful as evil worldly I-ness and My-ness are obstructive. The power of purifying and sublimating man's I-ness and My-ness so beautifully, is not to be found in any other means except in ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service or devotion. All scriptural courses like: knowledge, action etc., are imperfect and incomplete to accomplish this task. This is also one of reasons why the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is given importance in the devotional path of Puṣṭi.

ŚrīKṛṣṇa's devotee is the best Yogi :

Describing the quality of excellence of one who performs service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa in the Gītā, ŚrīKṛṣṇa says :

Yogi is better than one who penances,
Yogi is better than even those who have
accomplished knowledge and Yogi is better

than the followers of the path of action. Among all such Yogis, I consider that yogi as the best, who perform my worship with respect.

It is the duty of a servant to do what is dear to his master. In the above statement of the Gītā, ŚrīKṛṣṇa has considered that one who performs his service is better than those who adopt other means to attain him. How can one, than give predominance to any other means leaving aside ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service ?

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1. Listen again the most mysterious among the mysterious
 My words that are the bestower of the supreme fruit,
 Extremely dear you are to me
 Hence I tell you for the good of you.
 Thread your mind in, devotee of mine you be,
 Be my servant bow to me with utter humility,
 I tell you the truth you will obtain me.
 Know this, as you are very dear to me.

What is Sevā ?

In treatise 'Siddhānta-muktāvalī', ŚrīVallabhācārya has described two categories of service referring to the stage of devotee:

1. Phala-rūpā Mānasī Sevā and
2. Sādhana-rūpā / Tanu-vittajā Sevā

Phalarūpā Mānasī Sevā:

When the devotee is completely attached to ŚrīKṛṣṇa with profound affection and without a least deviation of mind, the service in such state is called 'Phalarūpa Sevā'—the service in the state of accomplishment (maturity) or service in the form of fruit. It is also known as 'Mānasī Sevā'.

Sādhana-rūpā / Tanu-vittajā Sevā:

'Sādhana' means an instrument. The service which is under instrumental stage is called 'Sādhana-rūpā Sevā'. It is also known as 'Tanu-vittajā Sevā'. 'Tanu' means body and 'Vitta' means wealth. The service that is performed with one's own body, one's own wealth and in one's own house is called 'Tanu-vittajā seva'. This is called 'instrumental' because in the beginning application of mind and intensity of love remains at a low level.

Tanuvittajā = Dedication of everything :

At the time of receiving initiation, declaration is made by the devotee to dedicate his body, home, family, wealth etc. along with his soul to ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

“For countless years have I been separated from my beloved Lord Kṛṣṇa and that has robbed me not only of the pangs of separation, which a healthy soul, as a rule, ought to feel but also of the infinite joy that I had in his company. Here I lay down at his lotus-feet my body, sense-organs, vital breath and my mind, together with their various functions. I also lay down my beloved, my house, my progeny, my relatives and my wealth, together with my worldly as well as other-worldly belongings. Not only these but I also lay down even my very self. Henceforth, O Lord Kṛṣṇa! I, your humble servant, am absolutely yours”.

Such oral dedication that is performed before ŚrīKṛṣṇa is called ‘Nivedana’ (declaration). When all these orally dedicated objects are taken in use of the worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, it is called ‘Samarpaṇa’ (dedication). Until they are dedicated in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, the orally dedicated objects remain as undedicated. May it not be forgotten that those who have received Brahma-sambandha have to stop using objects that are undedicated.

In treatise ‘Siddhānta-rahasya’ Śrī Vallabhācārya has given instruction of dedication of all belongings :

Nivedibhiḥ samarpyaiva sarvaṁ kuryād iti sthitiḥ

Meaning: It is a rule to be observed that a person who has dedicated himself to ŚrīKṛṣṇa should take in his use any object and should do any work only after dedicating them to ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

Tasmād ādau sarva-kārye sarva-vastu-samarpaṇam

Meaning: At the outset of any work, therefore, all objects should be dedicated to ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

This dedication of one’s all belongings that is instructed in the treatise of ‘Siddhānta-rahasya’ is the very purport of ‘Tanu-vittajā Sevā’.

Not Tanujā & Vittajā, but ‘Tanuvittajā’ :

Śrī Vallabhācārya has explained in his treatise ‘Siddhānta-muktāvalī’ that Tanu-vittajā service is an instrument to reach Mānasi-sevā. Here ‘Tanu’ means body and ‘Vitta’ means wealth. Be it not forgotten that dedication of every belonging that is said in the treatise ‘Siddhānta-rahasya’ is the real meaning of ‘Tanuvittajā’ service. If ‘Tanu’ is meant only the body and ‘Vitta’ is meant only the wealth, the dedication of senses, vital breath, internal organ with its Dharmas, wife, husband, son, daughter, family, house, wealth, etc. will remain undedicated. Hence, the word ‘Tanu’ includes senses, vital

breath, internal organ (mind, intellect, memory, ego) and their functions along with the body. Similarly, the word 'Vitta' means house, family wealth etc., along with money. Explaining this in his commentary on the treatise 'Siddhānta-muktāvalī' Prabhucaraṇa Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī says :

“When a person dedicates all his belongings to ŚrīKṛṣṇa and employs his body in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa without holding in his mind any kind of worldly sentiment (like temptation, hypocrisy, prestige, desire for wealth and rivalry), he can have manifestation of love in his heart for ŚrīKṛṣṇa and he can concentrate his mind in Kṛṣṇa”.

According to the above mentioned statement of Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī, the dedication of all belongings in the worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa becomes possible only when Tanu (the body etc.) and Vitta (wealth, house etc) are both employed simultaneously (at one and the same time) and not separately in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Here, one issue requires due consideration. Suppose, there is a person who has no time to perform ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service by himself. He employs in his home servants for performing ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service; or he provides regularly or occasionally money and/or food etc. to the temple or Havelī where the facility of sponsoring service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is provided. Can it be considered as his service? Or could he be considered 'Sevak' (servant)

of ŚrīKṛṣṇa? Can this service be fruitful for him? Similarly, suppose there is a man (ordinary householder, house servant, employee in temple or Havelī) receives regular or occasional payment of money and food stuff from somebody else (who desires to have hired service) and performs ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service. (That means he performs the service by himself but uses money etc. received from others) Can this service be credited to him? Can the service performed by both these persons be recognized lawful in the devotional path of Puṣṭi?

Since long, both kinds of services cited above are being propagated (even from Gurus) in the sect. But the study of the original works of Śrī Vallabhācārya, Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī and others clearly states that such types of services are no service at all. Those who perform this type of service can never reach the stage of Mānasī Sevā. Explaining this in his commentary on Siddhānta-muktāvalī, Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthajī says :

The worship that is got performed through some other person (In temple, Havelī or home) by making payment of money (gifts, foodstuff or payment etc.) is one kind of worship. And the service that is performed by receiving money (gift, foodstuff or Nyochāvāra etc.) is the second kind of worship. One's mind can never get attached to ŚrīKṛṣṇa by performing/getting performed any of these two kinds of services (by receiving money or by paying money).

To express such sense, ŚrīVallabhācārya has intentionally made the use of the collective word 'Tanuvittajā' (and not used two separate words: 'Tanujā' and 'Vittajā').

The use of the collective word 'Tanuvittajā' by ŚrīVallabhācārya and the comments of ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthajī and ŚrīPuruṣottamajī clarifies that the service that is got performed by providing gifts, food stuff or salary and the service that is performed by receiving gifts, food stuff or salary viz. performing Tanujā and Vittajā Sevā separately is unlawful and, therefore, intolerable in the sect.

While taking vow of Self-dedication, devotee declares 'Henceforth, O Lord Krishna! I your humble servant am absolutely yours'. That is to say he pledges to dedicate everything in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa and promises to serve ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself. Here, the word 'servant' is justifiable only if he performs service by oneself. The man who himself does not perform the service or who gets it performed through somebody else should be called 'the Master' and not the servant. Similarly, a person who does not perform service willingly and performs under somebody's pressure or with temptation to obtain money or prestige cannot be called a devotee. One who can understand this much, can also understand that separately performed Tanujā Sevā and Vittajā Sevā cannot be treated as service. By performing service of such fictitious kind both the service and the prime sentiment

of service are destroyed.

Hence, those who perform such fictitious kind of service do not obtain the fruit of service. On the contrary they obtain adverse fruit. Giving warning to such people, in the commentary of the treatise 'Siddhānta-muktāvalī', ŚrīPuruṣottamajī writes:

One who occupies (any Mukhiyās, Bhūtiyā or Goswami preceptor) to perform the worship of ŚrīKṛṣṇa by making payment (in the form of gifts, food stuff, Nyochāvara or anything) the outcome will be emergence of the egocentricity. He can never attach his mind in ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Similarly, (Mukhiā-Bhūtiyā or Goswami preceptors) who receive money (gifts, food stuff, Nyochāvara etc) in return of performing Tanujā service, cannot attach their mind to ŚrīKṛṣṇa. It may be permissible in the path of Karma to perform rites on behalf of others, but it is not permissible in the path of devotion. As ŚrīKṛṣṇa has nowhere instructed to perform or to get performed this type of hired service in the devotional path. Hence, one should not perform service accordingly but perform in accordance with the instruction of ŚrīKṛṣṇa (as ŚrīKṛṣṇa instructed Uddhavajī to perform service by self declaration, holding sentiment of being the humble servant and dedicating

everything to ŚrīKṛṣṇa). Thus, if worship is performed as instructed by ŚrīKṛṣṇa, then only a devotee can reach the higher stage of service (MānasīSevā) from the stage of instrumental service (Sādhana-rūpā tanu-vittajā Sevā).

It becomes crystal clear from above all that the performer of Tanujā (alone) service, receiving money from others, becomes a sinner. In scripture he is called 'Devalaka', one who makes money through the service of Bhagavān. The performer of Vittajā service becomes a partaker in the sinful business of selling service. Hence separately performed Tanujā service and Vittajā service are anti-doctrinal in the sect. Hence, the disciple of the sect should not practice in such ways. One should never give (even to Goswami preceptors) anything to anybody or receive from anybody in the name of the service of God. Every faithful devotee of Puṣṭi sect (including Goswami preceptors) should enshrine ŚrīKṛṣṇa (not in public temples or Havelis) in one's own home and should perform worship through one's own body and wealth. Only this is the truthful service.

Sevya-svarūpa (The Deity)

The God who is worshipped as a favourite god is called: 'Sevya-svarūpa' i.e. the 'Deity'. Sevya = who is worshiped and Svarūpa = God himself and not His image or idol. ŚrīKṛṣṇa, the Supreme Brahma, the Supreme Being, the God of all gods, the Lord of Vraja is the deity in the devotional path of Puṣṭi.

After the initiation of self-dedication, it is the duty of the devotee to dedicate everything in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. It is not possible for a devotee to dedicate all his belongings to ŚrīKṛṣṇa until ŚrīKṛṣṇa dwells in devotee's house. Here, a problem arises, how can ŚrīKṛṣṇa be located in such way? This problem can be solved only if ŚrīKṛṣṇa incarnates in the home of the devotee as he incarnated in the home of ŚrīNandrājī and become one with his life.

Since present time is not the time of incarnation, ŚrīKṛṣṇa dwells in the life of devotee in the form of Sevya-svarūpa, deity. It will be clarified soon after the God and deity are one and not separate entities according to the philosophy of Śuddhādvaita-brahmavāda.

In treatise Tatvārtha-dīpa-nibandha ŚrīVallabhācārya says:

In fact everything here is Brahma (omnipresent ŚrīKṛṣṇa) by its nature. But in the case of idol or Svarūpa there is something special. ŚrīKṛṣṇa graces his devotee with a will: "I shall uplift this devotee". And thus, ŚrīKṛṣṇa incarnates in the house of his devotee in the form of deity.

God and Deity are one :

ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthajī, hence, says in the rite of bestowing deity upon his devotee that one who performs service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa should not see any difference between the deity and ŚrīKṛṣṇa. That is to say, one should not hold such sentiment that one that is worshipped is an idol i.e. an image or other material object representing a deity (ŚrīKṛṣṇa) to which worship is addressed. Similarly, one should not hold any discrimination as to one's deity that ŚrīKṛṣṇa will be manifested out of the deity by performing its service. The Svarūpa (Himself) of worship that is seated in one's home is none else but the supreme Being ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself. One should perform worship with such devout sentiment.

Hence, ŚrīVallabhācārya says in Tatvārtha-dīpa-nibandha :

Brahma is Sākāra i.e. with form at the same time Brahma is Vyāpaka i.e. without any limitation in time, space and object also. Moreover, he resides as Antaryāmin i.e. soul

of every soul. So (when everything is God then why to wonder if) the idol also is God Himself. Therefore, whatever worship bath, embellishment, offering etc. is addressed to the idol of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is addressed to ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself. In the same way if one becomes guilty of an offence to the idol of ŚrīKṛṣṇa it is treated as an offence to ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself.

ŚrīKṛṣṇa resides in every atom of the universe. Hence, if a devotee establishes his devout sentiment in the idol of ŚrīKṛṣṇa (taking him as his Lord) then ŚrīKṛṣṇa becomes the deity of worship for his devotee.

It is said in Bhāgavat Purāṇa :

By your extreme grace you manifest all those forms that your devotees contemplate with their devout sentiment.

Prahlāda could realize Bhagavān everywhere in the world. Therefore, he did not hold any kinds of sentiments of anger or enmity even for his father, preceptors and other demons who were ready to kill him. His father Hiranyakaśipu had no trust upon Bhagavān's power of all-pervasive-ness. Bhagavān manifested form the pillar of the palace at the prayer of his devotee Prahlāda. Bhagavān killed his demon-father Hiranyakaśipu and saved Prahlāda.

Śrī Vallabhācārya, therefore, says that when ŚrīKṛṣṇa wishes to uplift some great devotee, he incarnates in his devotees' home as he manifested from the pillar for his devotee Prahlāda. Hence, the deity is considered in this sect as the manifestation of ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

How to comprehend ŚrīKṛṣṇa?

A question may arise here: Why don't the present-time devotees experience the same kind of experience of ŚrīKṛṣṇa which ŚrīNandarāyaji, ŚrīYaśodājī and Vraj-devotees had experienced, if the deity in their home is ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself or if it is the manifestation of ŚrīKṛṣṇa in his very person?

In order to understand this question, it is necessary to know the difference between ŚrīKṛṣṇa's the time of incarnation and the time of non-incarnation.

We have seen before that the whole animate and inanimate universe is like a stage that ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself has created to play upon it. An actor, sometimes, plays his role without makeup i.e. without hiding his identity and sometimes play with makeup i.e. concealing his identity. Similarly, ŚrīKṛṣṇa too, sometimes plays his pastimes in his manifested form and sometimes he plays in un-manifested form - invisible form. Thus, these two types of Līlās of ŚrīKṛṣṇa are known as Avatāra (manifested) Līlā i.e. the Līlā of the time of his incarnation and the An-avatāra (un-manifested) Līlā i.e.

the Līlā of ŚrīKṛṣṇa of the time when he was not incarnated.

Avatāra (manifested) Līlā:

When ŚrīKṛṣṇa alights on the earth from his abode, the sports and pastimes he plays in his manifested form are called 'Avatāra Līlā'. For example: when ŚrīKṛṣṇa manifested at ŚrīNandarāyaji's home, all inhabitants of Vraja directly experienced ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Devotees of that time worshiped ŚrīKṛṣṇa with varied sentiments of son, brother, friend, beloved, disciple etc. ŚrīKṛṣṇa too, granted his devotees to have his look in accordance with their sentiments. Such Līlā of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is called the Avatāra Līlā.

An-avatāra (Un-manifested) Līlā:

As in the time of his incarnation when ŚrīKṛṣṇa plays his Līlā without being manifested, such Līlās are called An-avatāra Līlā. For example: ŚrīKṛṣṇa returned to his abode after accomplishing the deeds of uplifting Vraja - devotees, destroying demons, establishing Dharma etc. The time between ŚrīKṛṣṇa's returning to his abode and reincarnating upon the earth is called 'the time of Non-Incarnation'. The present time is the time of non-incarnation.

In the time of incarnation ŚrīKṛṣṇa remains present in the world in his manifested form. So everyone can experience Him. No matter if one is Jñānī (knowledgeable) or ignorant, devote or un-devote, sinful or virtuous, all can behold ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Whereas, in the time of non-incarnation, ŚrīKṛṣṇa being

omnipresent, remains present everywhere however, he is not so available to all as he is in the time-of-incarnation. It means that in non-incarnation time all people can't have the experience of ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

This can be understood by the illustrations of the water of rain and the water of the well. In rainy season, people can avail of rainwater for the purpose of bathing, drinking etc. without much effort. But after rainy-season they have to fetch water from a well. Similarly, when ŚrīKṛṣṇa incarnates, all people can experience ŚrīKṛṣṇa as the experience the rainy water. Similarly, people who want to experience ŚrīKṛṣṇa similar to that of the incarnation time, first should adopt the course of devotion etc. That is what ŚrīKṛṣṇa wishes and that is what scriptures say. The truth of this statement can be realized by going through the history of 84-252 Vaiṣṇavas of Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga and the history of other devotees narrated in Purāṇas.

There is always incarnation - time in Puṣṭi-Bhakti-Mārga :

The present time is generally known as non-incarnation-time but for the devotees who are blessed by ŚrīKṛṣṇa and perform ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service are blessed to have incarnation-time even in non-incarnation-time of ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

Obstructions in experiencing ŚrīKṛṣṇa :

From the view point of Bhagavān, as we have seen above, realization and unrealisation of Bhagavān depends upon

the solemn will of Bhagavān himself. Similarly, considering from the view-pointed of the being, ignorance of Bhgavān's greatness as well as lack of devotion stands as a wall between him and ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

Very often it is experienced that people cannot recognize things lying before them or cannot properly evaluate situation they face because of insufficient knowledge, lack of attention or mind overpowered by sentiments of desire, anger etc. same thing happens in the matter of experiencing ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

As said earlier, ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself dwells in the home of his devotees in the form of deity. However, it is seen that all devotees do not experience ŚrīKṛṣṇa in person. Why? Just as a person who wears coloured spectacles can't see real colours of an object but can see true colours by removing such spectacles, similarly, devotees can not realize ŚrīKṛṣṇa in person until love for ŚrīKṛṣṇa and the knowledge of his magnanimity is not awakened in him and begins to have experience of ŚrīKṛṣṇa as he develops love and devotion for ŚrīKṛṣṇa and the knowledge of His greatness. In brief, realization of Bhagavān is subject to His acceptance of being. When ŚrīKṛṣṇa chooses the being as his devotee, the being attains ability to realize ŚrīKṛṣṇa. On other hand ŚrīKṛṣṇa too, becomes subject of devotion of his devotee.

Why is Bhagavān not worshiped everywhere?

According to the scriptures there is no place in the universe

where Brahma (ŚrīKṛṣṇa) is not present. However, it is forbidden to worship him anywhere. The reason for this interdiction can be understood easily with the help of an illustration. We bow down to elders to show respect to them. Anatomically speaking, elderliness of a person does not lie only in his legs but it lies from his head to his toe. However, even mad man will not bow to the head of the elder instead of bowing at the feet. In the same way, a child who bows at the feet of his elder is a child from his head to his feet. However, his elder will bless him not on his feet but on his head. This is the question of etiquette.

This illustration shows that as we consider etiquettes in our social life, similarly, scriptural etiquettes should be considered in the matters of worship of the deity etc. Scriptures have prescribed a rule to worship deities in idol of stone, metal or wood, in a picture etc. Various other objects such as the Sun, the fair also have been prescribed for the worship of deity in Scriptures. But, in the path of devotion, idol of ŚrīKṛṣṇa made of stone, metal or wood; or the picture form is preferred for the service.

Svārtha-Pratiṣṭhā & Parārtha-Pratiṣṭhā:

Scripture prescribes some ceremony to install deity in the idol before the worship is performed. Such ceremony is called 'Prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā' (ceremony of infusing life in the idol) or 'Āvāhana' (ceremony of Invocation of Deity in the

Idol). Such ceremony is performed for the sake of satisfaction of the devotee. There are two kinds of 'Pratiṣṭhā' described in the scriptures:

1. Svārtha-pratiṣṭhā
2. Parārtha-pratiṣṭhā

Svārtha-pratiṣṭhā

When the deity is installed in devotee's home for performing service by himself only, it is called 'Svārtha-pratiṣṭhā' (Svārtha = For oneself; Pratiṣṭhā = Installation) i.e. Installation of the deity for worship by oneself. The devotee himself, by rule, has to perform the worship of the deity installed in his home. Moreover, he has to employ his own wealth in the service of the deity. He can't accept any gift or donation in cash or kind from anybody else for the service of his deity. He is called 'Devalaka' (great sinner) if anybody exhibits his deity to make money or accepts gift or donation in cash or kind from anybody else in the favour of his deity, or commercializes service of his deity. Scriptures command that people should not deal with a person who treats worship of god as a job. It is a sin to talk to Devalaka, to see Devalaka and to touch Devalaka.

Parārtha-Pratiṣṭhā:

When the deity is not installed for the service by a devotee or at the most by a family, but it is installed with a view to giving benefit to people in general so that they

may have Darśana and worship, it is called 'Parātha-Pratiṣṭhā' (Parātha = For others' sake; Pratiṣṭhā = Installation) i.e. the Installation of the deity for people in general. For example: the deities of Śrī Jagannāthajī, Śrī Tirupati-bālājī, Pāṇdurāṅga Śrī Viṭhobājī, Śrī Raṇachodarājī, Badri-nārāyaṇa etc. are installed for the people in general.

Bhāva-Pratiṣṭhā in Puṣṭi-Sect :

There are two types of devotion :

1. Maryādā devotion and
2. Puṣṭi devotion.

In the first one, scriptural ceremony and treatment of mantras are more important. Whereas Puṣṭi devotion emphasizes on the sentiment of affection for the deity. Therefore, Puṣṭi devotion does not have the kind of installation of deity like Maryādā devotion. Instead, considering Gods nature of omnipresence, installation of 'Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhāva' (=sentiment of being Śrī Kṛṣṇa) in idol is systematized in the devotional path of Puṣṭi.

Parātha-Pratiṣṭhā is not recognized :

Parātha-Pratiṣṭhā of the deity is against the doctrine and the sentiment of Puṣṭi devotion. In this devotional path every devotee (Followers and Goswami preceptors too) has to perform Śrī Kṛṣṇa's service at his own home, by himself, with his own belongings, without accepting anything from

anybody for deity. The devotee has to perform the service of the deity in his home privately. According to Ācārya Śrī Harirājī, if one who does not belong to Puṣṭi sect is allowed to have Darśana (look) of one's deity, one year service turns to be fruitless on account of this offence. Ācārya Śrī Gopīnāthajī says that relatives who do not belong to Puṣṭi sect and followers of Puṣṭi sect who are not so close should not be allowed to have Darśana (look) of one's deity. It becomes clear after considering these doctrines that Parātha-Pratiṣṭhā and public service are in no way acceptable in Puṣṭi sect.

The deity and the sentiment :

In his famous work 'Śikṣāśloki', Śrī Vallabhācārya says :

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa, bear in mind, is not altogether a worldly God, and so he never nourishes worldly sentiments of the person who performs his service. So my (Śrī Vallabhācārya's) sentiment in Śrī Kṛṣṇa should be known is only this that in this world or in the hereafter world what is ours—our own is only Śrī Kṛṣṇa and none else”.

What should be the sentiments while serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is so divine? Śrī Vallabha says in the treatise 'Catuḥśloki' :

Sarvadā sarva-bhāvena bhajanīyo vrajādhipaḥ

Meaning: ŚrīKṛṣṇa, the Lord of Vraja, should be served always and wholeheartedly with all the sentiments.

The word 'Sarva-bhāva' (all sentiments) placed in this verse can be explained in the following three meanings:

1. Sarva-bhāva = ŚrīKṛṣṇa is all-in-all of the being—the saviour, the nourisher, the inspirer, the friend, the bestower of all fruits, the preceptor.
- 2, ŚrīKṛṣṇa himself has taken the name and form of all sentient beings as well as insentient objects. Having such knowledge of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is called 'Sarva-bhāva'.
3. Only Bhagavān is the divine Lord of all—the soul, the body, the senses, the vital air, the internal organ, family, home, wealth—whatever belongs to the devotee. To have such deep-seated sentiment is also called 'Sarva-bhāva'.

All the three above mentioned meanings of 'Sarva-bhāva' are quite appropriate with regard to ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Hence one should perform the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa keeping such sentiment in his mind.

ŚrīVallabhācārya has preached to serve ŚrīKṛṣṇa with keeping in mind his all-comprising character. However, since last few years, some self-centered deceivers give ludicrous and distorted instructions to the devotees. They say:

Since the disciples are not mature enough

to comprehend ŚrīKṛṣṇa's all-comprising divine characters like Puruṣottama (supreme being) Antaryāmī (Soul of all individual souls) etc. they should serve ŚrīKṛṣṇa's idol by keeping in it the sentiment of Guru, the living God (!!!) Only Goswami preceptors have got this sort of eligibility therefore, only they can serve ŚrīKṛṣṇa as Puruṣottama.

The Puṣṭi-beings who do not wish to go astray from the path of Puṣṭi-devotion should discern such false and fake instructors as imposters and should entirely give up their wicked company. It should be remembered that if instructions of such beguiler are followed, it is sure, it will lead one to the downfall from the noble path of Puṣṭi-devotion.

The doctrine in this matter should be carefully marked. In the rite of the deity's installation, Ācārya ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthajī has clearly instructed to the Gurus, quite contrary to the fabricated preaching of the above referred beguiling present days instructors, that ŚrīKṛṣṇa's idol should be bestowed upon the devotee by keeping sentiment: 'this is Bhagavān Gokuleṣṭh ŚrīKṛṣṇa and not His image'.

Hence, ŚrīGokulanāthajī has stated in his commentary of the treatise Siddhānta-rahasya:

“In the path of Puṣṭi devotion, service of the Pūrṇa Puruṣottama (supreme being)

ŚrīKṛṣṇa only must be performed, and not of ŚrīKṛṣṇa's part-forms such as Guru etc. or of ŚrīKṛṣṇa's superhuman forms such as other gods and goddesses".

It becomes clear from all above facts that according to the principles of Puṣṭi sect ŚrīKṛṣṇa is served with Sarva-Bhāva and not with the sentiment of only Guru etc. However, when the service of Bhagavān is performed with the sentiments that are not permissible in the sect like Guru-bhāva or Bhāva of Puruṣottama characterized by Guru-bhāva, devotee commits the offence of Anyāśraya i.e. taken resort in gods other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

To be more precise, being omnipresence and omnipotent, the supreme being ŚrīKṛṣṇa conceals his character of supreme being in the idol and manifests his part-form of Guru etc. when some devotee serves him with the sentiment of Guru etc. In such case the worship is not addressed to ŚrīKṛṣṇa. It is addressed to the Guru or whatever may be the case. In this state, that deity worshipped with non-Puṣṭi sentiments does not remain worthy of being served in the way as instructed by ŚrīVallabhācārya. It remains only as a part-form of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Here, the doctrine of Anyāśraya reminds that if any Puṣṭi being serves the partial incarnation of ŚrīKṛṣṇa (guru etc.) or super human forms of ŚrīKṛṣṇa (other gods and goddesses), he commits the offence of having taken resort in gods other than ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Hence, the offence of Anyāśraya is applicable

to one who performs service with the sentiment of Guru etc. Therefore, Puṣṭi disciples should perform the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa with the sentiments that ŚrīVallabhācārya has preached in the treatises of Śikṣāślokī and Catuḥślokī.

All ŚrīKṛṣṇa's Svarūpa (Idol) are Equal :

Doesn't this title sound absolutely funny ? It does. And it is really funny. But, unfortunately, it is also true that many wicked preachers and, because of their false preaching, many innocent devotees also entertain such irrational sentiment. Mainly there are four criterion of the categorization of the deities :

1. Category of the worshiper
2. Category of the worship
3. Purity
4. Base of the deity

For example,

1.

The deities worshipped by ŚrīVallabhācārya are more powerful than the deities worshipped by his son ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthajī. The deities worshipped by ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthajī are more powerful than the deities served by his seven-sons. The deities served by the seven-sons are more powerful than those that are served by other (modern) Vallabha's descendents. And the deities served by modern descendents of ŚrīVallabhācārya are more powerful than

the deities served by the ordinary followers and so on.' This is the one kind of categorization.

2.

Some people categorize deities of the followers on the basis of the types of Bhoga i.e. eatable offerings such as Sakhaḍī, Ana-sakhaḍī, Nāgarī, Dūdhagara, dry and green fruits, sugar-candy etc. offered to them. Accordingly, the deities that are offered Sakhaḍī (food prepared of grain by boiling it) are the best of all. The deities that are offered Anasakhaḍī (food prepared of grain by frying it in Ghee) are better than those that relish Dudhar (sweets made of milk) and so on. Thus, they hold the opinion that deities that are offered preceding items of food are better than the deities that relish the succeeding items.

3.

Similarly there are the people who believe that the deities that are served by observing strict conduct of purity (Meṇḍ - Marajād) are better than the deities who are served with maintaining less purity.

4.

Again, some people believe that the deities that are made of metal are better than the deities that are in the form of picture. Other people say that the wooden deities are better than the metallic deities, and the deities of stone are better than that of wood. Some people consider

that the black deities are better than the deities of other colour.

In the devotional path of Puṣṭi there cannot be any other sin that is bigger than the sin of categorizing ŚrīKṛṣṇa's Svarūpa by any of above reasons. ŚrīVallabhācārya, propounder of Brahma-vāda which says, 'the whole universe is the manifestation of Brahma, the universal self' would prefer atheist more than the wicked preachers and foolish followers who categorize divinity of the deities.

The selfish-ness that lies behind the deceptive instructors' spreading such kinds of beliefs is that by hook or by crook if they succeed in convincing followers that their deities are inferior than the deities of the temples and Havelis, the ignorant devotees who perform service of their deities at their home will develop complex of inferiority and consequently consider their deities of lower types. Henceforth, they will never get satisfaction in serving their deities. On the other hand, knowing very well that they will not be allowed to perform service of the deities of temple & Haveli, such defrauded devotees will be eager to fulfill their desires of doing service by offering offerings in cash & kind, which is welcomed always, to so called the most powerful deities of the temple & Haveli. Here is the success. Business of the wicked instructors will go on in full swing.

Today, the wicked preachers have successfully victimized

most of the disciples of this sect. Disciples have enshrined ŚrīKṛṣṇa in their home for service. They are doing service. But, the requisite sentiment, faith in heart, affection for their deity is absent. As a result, Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa, in his very person, is seated in their own homes as a Svarupa-of-worship, even though devotees become crazy for having Darśana (look) of ŚrīKṛṣṇa elsewhere i.e. Havelis and temples.

Some poor devotees, who do serve their deities sincerely and faithfully but with their limited resources, catch inferiority complex in their deities after seeing rich (in fact artificial, faithless and money minded) treatment given to the deities of temples and Havelies with silver and golden utensils, servants, bigger place, huge offerings etc.

We have a very good example of such deprived devotee sited in the history of ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthaji. It clearly shows how disastrous the result of categorization among the Svarūpas-of-worship could be.

ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthaji's sons and daughters used to serve their respective deities in their own homes. Once the eldest son ŚrīGiridharajī entertained such a wish that all the deities as well as Srinathaji, the deity of ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthaji's joint-family may relish together the offering of Annakūta. He went to ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthaji for the permission in this matter. At first ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthaji flatly refused to do so. When requested again, he asked his family god Śrīnāthajī to know his desire

in this matter. While asking he politely conveyed his own opinion that by doing so, some anti-devotional unpleasant feeling will emerge and it will turn into the ranking of other deities. But as the Lord himself wanted to teach lesson to the modern descendents through the example of Vallabha dynasty, he pleasingly approved ŚrīGiridharajī's wish. ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthaji granted permission half-heartedly. All deities were brought and seated together and the offering of Annakūta was offered. But, ultimately, it happened exactly what ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthaji was afraid of.

One daughter of ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthajī left the service of her own deity in between in the greed of having Darśana of such a great festival and went to the place where all the deities of his brothers were relishing the offerings of Annakūta. ŚrīViṭṭhalanāthajī incidentally saw her and so he became extremely angry. He scolded his daughter in harsh words and instructed her:

“Why have you come here leaving the service of your own deity? Does any other god sit at your place? (In other words, have you any doubt that your own deity sitting at your home is different from being the very absolute supreme Being? Or, do you understand other deity better than your own deity?) I had already stated that by doing so anti-devotional unpleasant feeling will emerge and it will turn into the ranking of the deities.

Hearing this reprimand daughter of Śrī Viṭṭhalanāthaji went her home repenting in her mind. When she beheld her own deity, she was blessed with the Darśana that all the deities of her brothers along with Śrīnāthajī were relishing Annakūta at her home!

This incident explains us how much harmful is the sentiment of ranking among deities. It eradicates with its very root the doctrine of service as well as the sentiment.

We now know the true tenet preached by Śrī Vallabhācārya. Hence, while performing the service the devotee should not entertain any sentiments which may not be in conformity with the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, character of ŚrīKṛṣṇa or sentiment of Līlā. Similarly one should never bring in mind the sentiment of distinction of high and low, or any sort of difference among any ŚrīKṛṣṇa's Svarūpas of service.

In fact it is Brahma who has become the universe. There is nothing here that is non-Brahma. Moreover, when some devotee wants to do service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, He graces that devotee by incarnating in his home in the form of Svarūpa-of-worship with the distinctive desire to uplift him. Therefore, all Svarūpas-of-worship are the perfect supreme being ŚrīKṛṣṇa and none else.

The place of service

Where should the follower of the devotional path of Puṣṭi perform the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa? Resolving this question Śrī Vallabhācārya states in the treatise 'Bhakti-varḍhini':

Bīja-dardhya-prakāras-tu grhe sthitvā svadharmataḥ

Meaning : (In every Puṣṭi-being the Puṣṭi-devotion lies in its seed-form.) The only remedy to make it firmly rooted is to perform ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service at home by observing one's own Dharma.

Hence, according to Śrī Vallabhācārya the devotee's own home is the only place to perform the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

ŚrīKṛṣṇa service is devotee's way of living life:

Śrī Vallabhācārya has accepted the service and devotion of ŚrīKṛṣṇa as the devotee's way of living the life. Hence, Śrī Vallabhācārya has regulated the kind of service and the sentiment of service in the life of the devotee in such a way that ŚrīKṛṣṇa may remain at the centre of each and every activity such as waking and sleeping, eating and drinking, doing job and work, marrying etc. Such kind of service can subsist at no other place except at the devotee's home. The service of Bhagavan in temple or Haveḷi ceases to be

a devotee's way of living the life and turns into dry rite or it becomes show business.

Complete dedication is impossible without the service in one's own home:

Dedication of all that belongs to oneself and abandonment of all things that are not dedicated to ŚrīKṛṣṇa, these two rules must be observed by the devotee who has received the initiation of Brahma-sambandha.

'Dedication of all' means to employ in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa each and every thing and person that belongs to him including his own body, members of his family, house, wealth and property, cattle etc.

"Abandonment of what is not dedicated" means whatsoever things like eatable, and drinkable objects, wealth and property, house etc. that are not employed in the service of Bhagavan, should not be taken in use by one who has received the initiation of Brahma-sambandha.

In this state, it is quite clear that if the person who has received the initiation of Brahma-sambandha does not do service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa at his home, in no other way he is able to make the dedication of the whole of his wealth and property, all his worldly and Vaidic pursuits, the members of his family, his own body and his own house in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Hence, ŚrīVallabhācārya has shown that the

service in home is the only remedy by which dedication of all belongings can be made to ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

All undedicated without the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa at home:

We have seen that the dedication is not possible without receiving ŚrīKṛṣṇa at one's own home. Hence, one who does not perform service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa at home his house, family, wealth and property, eatable, and drinkable objects—all remain undedicated. Here, it must be remembered that the initiated Puṣṭi devotee must give up by all means such undedicated objects. Bhagavan himself has given such ordainment to ŚrīVallabhācārya. (the treatise of Siddhānta-rahasya is the compilation of the ordainment of ŚrīVallabhācārya that he in very person gave to ŚrīVallabhācārya). Therefore, those Puṣṭi devotees who are spending undedicated life by not doing service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa in their home and who wander in temples and Havelis for the sake of Darsana etc., if they want to save themselves from the heinous crime of using undedicated objects, there is no other go except doing service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa at home.

Affectionate devotion springs up only in solitude:

It is well known tendency of human mind that if our emotions do not get outlet and remain suppressed they become extinct. Moreover, if emotions do not get proper outlet they may cause abnormal behavior. Similar is the case with devout sentiment. Suppressed devotion gets extinct, and if devotion is expressed at random (in any haphazard way), there is every possibility of its being deformed in scandalous exhibition

of the sentiment of love. Hence, it is extremely necessary to know the proper way for expressing the sentiment of devotion. In the treatise 'Bhakti-varadhini' ŚrīVallabhācārya has narrated this as under :

1. One should do ŚrīKṛṣṇa's service at one's home with one's own body and wealth, characterized by dedication of one's all belongings.
2. Hearing, singing and remembering of the Svarūpa, name, attribute and Līlā of Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa.

Love & affection for ŚrīKṛṣṇa is called 'Bhakti' (devotion). Service by Tanu-vitta - Service through one's body and money with total dedication is a way to express one's love before ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Hence, as the expression of affectionate feelings in public is regarded indecent, similarly, the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa with devout sentiment, too, must not be performed in public places like Havelis and temples. Hence, ŚrīVallabhācārya has stated in the 'Subodhini' commentary of Bhāgavata that :

The devout sentiment (Rasa) can attain perfection only if it is kept concealed. But if it is manifested or is made public, the sentiment of devotion turns into derogation (Rasābhāsa).

In the 'Prakāśa' commentary of Anubhāṣya ŚrīPuruṣottama-caraṇa elaborates its inner sense that :

The service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa should be performed in one's own home. The secrets (the service of Bhagavan and the sentiment of devotion) of one's own dharma should be kept hidden in the heart.

ŚrīHarirāyacaraṇa, too, in Śikṣāpatra states in an extremely beautiful way :

ŚrīKṛṣṇa is seated certainly in our home by the grace of ŚrīVallabhācārya, but in such a way that if our attention staggers a bit, he evades within no time, as mercury shirks away from the hand. Hence, ŚrīKṛṣṇa should be served with utmost cautiousness like that of a yogi.

As mercury that comes to the hand of some careless, rash man can't be withheld any longer, similarly, if the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is exhibited in public (as in the case of Havelis and temples), or if the service is performed or got performed with money obtained from the public ŚrīKṛṣṇa will never come to the heart of the person who serves him in that manner.

Here, one thing is worth engraving in the heart of all the followers of the sect. The doctrine of ŚrīVallabhācārya in the subject of the courses of the sect is one and the

same for every one who belongs to the Puṣṭi sect, whether he may be a follower or a Goswami Ācārya descending from Vallabha-dynasty itself. Hence, ŚrīHarirāyacaraṇa says that the mercury-pill can remain stable (steadfast) only in the hand of such a yogi whose mind wanders nowhere and whose activity too, is extremely controlled. Hence, one should serve one's own Bhagavan with that much cautiousness.

Svārtha-pratiṣṭha = Gṛha-sevā:

In the previous chapter two kinds of the installation of the deity had been narrated:

1. Svārtha-pratiṣṭha i.e. installation of the deity for one's own sake and
2. Parārtha-pratiṣṭha i.e. installation of the deity for others' sake.

There the matter had been made clear that in the tradition of Maryādā devotion, public worship has been accepted. Therefore, Parārtha-pratiṣṭha i.e. installation of the deity for others' sake also is accepted. But, in the case of Puṣṭi-devotion Parārtha-pratiṣṭha has not been accepted. Parallel to Svārtha-pratiṣṭha of Maryādā-mārga, Bhāva-pratiṣṭha is accepted in Puṣṭi devotion. As Bhagavān exists everywhere, can anybody install omnipresence god in idol? Hence, instead of Prāṇapratīṣṭhā, Bhāva-pratīṣṭhā is accepted in devotional path of Puṣṭi. Bhāva-pratīṣṭhā means fixation of devout sentiment. Here it should be noted that the deity which is installed

under the provision of Svārtha-pratiṣṭha (installed for one's own sake) cannot be worshipped publically (in temple or Havelī) by rule. Therefore, the only kind of performing the service that becomes acceptable in the devotional path of Puṣṭi is the service in home.

Books for further reading:

Bhakti-varadhini by Śrī Vallabhācārya

'Sarvanirṇaya' Ch. of Tatvadīpa-nibandha by Śrī Vallabhācārya

Sādhana-dīpika by Śrī Gopīnāthaḥ

Viśdhanikā by Gosvāmī Śrī Śyam manoharaḥ

Occupation of the devotee

Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa, the God of all gods, is the supreme Being par excellence. How can the service of such supreme Lord be performed with the means and money that are not of the best quality? Hence ŚrīVallabhācārya states in the 'Nibandha':

What is considered as excellent in the public should be utilized in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Hence, the money and the foodstuff too, that are to be dedicated in the divine service should have been earned by a virtuous way (and not by the ways that are considered as prohibited or derogated in scriptures or the sect). This has been stated to disallow the dedication of money and means in the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa earned by other ways (such as through 'Devalaka-vṛtti' i.e. devotional practice for earning livelihood and through Bhāgavata-vṛtti i.e. preaching Bhāgavata for earning livelihood) which have been forbidden and depreciated in scriptures and in the sect.

Hence, at least after becoming the follower of the path of Puṣṭi-devotion one should give up the occupation that is interdicted and condemned in scripture and the sect. Two very fine incidents explaining this matter have been narrated

in the history of ŚrīVallabhācārya's 84 disciples.

Bābāveṇu was a Sārasvata Brāhmaṇa. He installed a Kṛṣṇa-idol as a goddess in some temple and lived upon the earning of the temple. Thus, he was living upon the earning through 'Devalaka-vṛtti'. Once ŚrīVallabhācārya graced his village by his visit. Led by divine inspiration, Bābāveṇu became the disciple of ŚrīVallabhācārya. Ācāryajī directed him to perform the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa so secretly as no one can even know it. Then ŚrīVallabhācārya asked him to install some idol of a goddess in the temple which had been built on the bank of the village-pond and to get some Brahmin to carry on her worship. Together with this, ŚrīVallabhācārya gave a specific instruction that those Brāhmaṇas should not take anything for their own use from the offerings received in the temple for the goddess.

The secret that lies behind this ordainment of ŚrīVallabhācārya is this: the priest or devotee worships the deity to earn his livelihood has been called a heinous, sinful, impious 'Devalaka'. It has been stated in the scripture that if anybody touches such a Devalaka, he has to take bath along with the clothes he has put on. How can a devotee have such livelihood which has been prohibited by scriptures? Again,

how can the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa be performed with the money that is earned in such a way as has been slandered in scriptures? Hence ŚrīVallabhācārya ordained Bābāveṇu to perform service through the money which is earned by the unprohibited sources and giving up earning method of 'Devalaka'.

ŚrīVallabhācārya's disciples Padma-nābhadās and Jagatānanda lived on the earning obtained by preaching Bhāgavata. For ŚrīVallabhācārya, Bhāgavata is nothing but Bhagavān himself. How can one, who treats Bhāgavata as a means of earning one's livelihood be the disciple of Puṣṭi sect? Hence, ŚrīVallabhācārya recited before both of them a verse from his treatise of Nibandha :

Without having any other intention, (such as to earn money, to collect funds and contributions or in order to absolve those who are dead) the devotee should recite Bhāgavata by himself making earnest effort. Even if one dies of hunger, one should never use Bhāgavata for earning his livelihood.

No sooner did Padmanābhadāsa and Jagatānanda hear this, they took vow that henceforth they would never make the use of Bhāgavata Purāṇa to make money or to earn their livelihood. They gave up preaching Bhāgavata Purāṇa for earning their livelihood.

From all these it can be deduced that the service of the supreme Being Bhagavān ŚrīKṛṣṇa should be performed with money and means that are pure, and not with the money and means that are earned by a way that is forbidden or depreciated in scriptures or in the sect.

Service and Sadācāra (Purity)

The practice that is followed in accordance with the rules of purity directed by scriptures is called 'Sadācāra' in Sanātana (Hindu) Dharma.

Showing the significance of Sadācāra, it has been stated in scriptures:

Ācāraḥ prathamo dharmah

Meaning: good conduct is the primary duty.

Ācāra-hīnaḥ na punāti vedah

Meaning: Even the Veda cannot purify a person who does not observe purity.

The devotional path of Puṣṭi is a branch of the Sanātana Dharma. Every follower of the devotional path of Puṣṭi is first of all Sanātani i.e. Hindu. For this reason, it is as much necessary for every Puṣṭi disciple to observe the rules of purity and impurity shown in scriptures, as it is for any Sanātani in general.

We have seen that the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa should be performed by offering pure objects which are earned in the

pure way. Similarly, it is also quite necessary that the body and the mind, through which the service of Bhagavan is performed, also must be pure. The physical and the spiritual purity of the body and the mind can be obtained only by observing the scriptural Sadācāra. Hence, it becomes necessary for the followers of Puṣṭi-devotion to observe Sadācāra conduct as indicated in scriptures. For example:

- The touch of an unholy thing or a person should be avoided.
- If for any reason, such a thing or a person is touched, the purity should be obtained by doing Prāṇāyāma (taking-holding-releasing breath with control) by sprinkling water or taking a bath in appropriate way.
- If we have become impure, we should avoid performing holy deeds until we become pure again.
- Onion, garlic, carrot, watermelon etc., should not be eaten.
- The wine and other drinks that cause intoxication should not be taken.
- The income should be earned through the occupation as ascertained by the scripture with respect to every Varṇa like Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya etc. (If it is not possible to observe this or any other such rules in the present times, one should give up at least the conduct which has been prohibited or depreciated by the scriptures).

By observing scriptural rules of purity fitness to perform religious deeds is obtained. The ignorant children do not know how to behave in the society. Elders teach the etiquette and norms of the society. Similarly, scripture, too, teaches religious etiquettes and purify a man for making him worthy of doing deeds of Dharma.

Nobody likes restrictions. Hence, sometimes the feelings of dislike and indifference are awakened in our mind towards scriptural rules. But as instructions of the elders are for the good of small children, scriptural restrictions too, are for our good. Keeping such firm faith in scriptures one should discard from his mind the feelings of aversion and indifference towards the regulations purity. Purer and holier we become in going to perform the service of Bhagavan, more pleased will He be with us. Keeping such a pious sentiment in mind, the Puṣṭi devotee should obey scriptural rules.

It will not be irrelevant here to make some necessary clarification regarding Sadācāra. In view of scriptures themselves rules of purity and impurity are not rigid. For example :

There is a rule: religious deeds must be done after taking bath. Such a rule is indeed there. But for the person who is suffering from illness and it could be harmful for him to take bath by drenching his head, scriptures give him freedom to do religious deeds by having a bath without wetting the head or by sprinkling water by uttering the mantras,

or only by sipping water.

Similarly, suppose, a big amount of clothes that are placed in a cupboard become some how impure. As a rule, the clothes should be purified by washing them with water. But as there is a big heap of clothes, according to scripture, they can be purified even by sprinkling water on them.

Likewise, one man becomes impure by the touch of an impure person. The scriptures assert that he has to take bath. But if such a thing takes place in an association where a great number of people are gather together, such as at the occasion of a festival, marriage, pilgrimage or when natural calamity happens, in such cases there is no purity.

Thus, it can be seen that in scriptures where rules are formulated, exceptions to those rules too, have been shown simultaneously. Hence, it is our misconception that the scriptural rules are rigid. That scriptural rules are not rigid it does not mean that one can observe them haphazardly or as one like.

Here is a dilemma. On one hand it is said that the scriptural rules are not rigid, while on the other hand freedom of action is also denied. How can one get amicable solution about his action? For getting an answer to this question, it is necessary to have a bit of idea of the scriptural style of the description of the subject.

The description of duties in religious scriptures have been made generally in a style of observance of rules (Utsarga), exception (Apavāda) and restriction without exception (Pratiprasava).

Utsarga:

The rule to be observed in an ordinary state is called 'Utsarga' (general rule). For example, "one should speak the truth", "one should not tell a lie" etc.

Apavāda:

When some unusual situation arises, people are given special liberty with the general rule. This is called 'Apavāda' (exception). For example, it is not considered a blemish when a person tells a lie to save his life in a difficult situation, or he tells a lie in sports and games in which no harm is done to anybody or he tells a lie in fun.

Prati-prasava (Unexceptional Rule):

When a special situation arises, the liberty that is taken with the general rules depending upon the rule of exception is nullified and one has to follow the conduct according to the general rule. For example: even when a tough situation arises at the time of the worship of a deity or at the time of some special kind of sacrifice, telling a lie is strictly forbidden.

Before taking decision about any scriptural rule one should

consider all conditions and factors that are connected with that rule. Equally, one has to consider the time, the place, the situation of great pilgrimage-festival, the financial ability of a person, age, disease, physical and mental condition etc. also. It has been stated in the scripture that the person (Guru) who gives decisions of duties about scriptural purity and impurity and about the repentance etc. sends invitation to the sins, if he does so without considering all abovementioned factors properly. Hence, Śrī Vallabhācārya too, states in 'Subodhini' commentary of Bhāgavata that:

Anācāraḥ sadā tyājyō atyācāro'pi mūrkhataḥ

Meaning: Anācāra (malpractice) should be given up forever but the Atyācāra (tyrannical practice) of the scriptural conducts is nothing but foolishness.

The purport of this statement is only this that if the decision of scriptural conduct is taken after considering appropriately the general rule (Utsarga) the exceptional rule and the rule of restriction without exception, in that case, the conduct does not happen to be atrocious practice, but it remains the good conduct. Here, it is required to understand one thing particularly. If one has to take liberty with general rules in any circumstances, he should take that liberty only on the basis of the rule of exception and not according to the whims of his mind.

The essence of all this is ŚrīKṛṣṇa will be pleased much

more if His service, who is the holiest among the holy, is performed with as much purity as possible. Hence, one should perform the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa by observing as much purity as possible and keeping in mind devout sentiment of Bhagavan's appeasement.

In the end, it should never be forgotten that the necessity to purity is for the performance of the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa, and not vice-e-versa. Hence, one should neither remain disinclined to the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa under the pretext of the rules of purity nor the preceptors should let them remain without the performance of the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa. Sadācāra is the bodily dharma as prescribed in the dharma of the Varna and Āśrama, while the service of ŚrīKṛṣṇa is the dharma of the soul. The Dharma of the body is always secondary to the dharma of the soul.

Further Reading:

Dravyasuddhi by ŚrīPuruṣottamacaraṇa